

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

December 15, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell,

I urge you to bring legislation to the floor that provides permanent protections and a pathway to citizenship for the highest possible number of Dreamers, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) beneficiaries, consistent with the House-passed *DREAM and Promise Act*. I am encouraged that in recent weeks there have been bipartisan negotiations related to Dreamers, DACA, and TPS and I hope that through a standalone effort or our end-of-the-year spending bill we take action. Further delay in Congressional action means continued uncertainty for millions of talented and hardworking people who are American in every way except on paper.

For more than two decades, Congress has failed to reform our country's immigration system and made our country unable to take full advantage of the enormous benefits Dreamers and their families bring to our communities, the economy, and the country at large. Instead, millions of young people who know no other country and their families have had to rely on temporary programs while they wait on Congress to finally pass a permanent solution.

Started in 2012, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program has provided protection from deportation and employment authorization to more than 825,000 young people, including more than 8,600 Virginians.¹ On average, DACA citizens came to the U.S. in 2001 when they were just six years old – meaning that for them, this is the only country they have ever known. More than a third came before they were five years old.² The DACA program has increased recipients' sense of belonging to the community, strengthened their hope for the future, and drawn them into our country's civic life.

In the ten years since DACA began, recipients have grown up and built lives for themselves here in the U.S. They have gotten married and had U.S. citizen children – over 250,000 children have a DACA recipient as a parent.³ DACA recipients have started careers in management, education, sales, and food preparation – many more have started their own businesses.⁴ About 30,000 DACA recipients are

¹ Active DACA Recipients as of June 30th, 2022. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Available at: https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/Active_DACA_Recipients_June_30_2022.pdf.

² DHS, "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Final Rulemaking," August 30, 2022. RIN:1615-AC64. Available at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/08/30/2022-18401/deferred-action-for-childhood-arrivals>.

³ Center for American Progress, "What We Know About the Demographic and Economic Impacts of DACA Recipients: Spring 2020 Edition," April 6, 2020. Available at: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/know-demographic-economic-impacts-daca-recipients-spring-2020-edition/>.

⁴ Center for American Progress, "What We Know About DACA Recipients in the United States," September 2019. Available at: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/know-daca-recipients-united-states/>.

healthcare workers and have played an essential role on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic and in mitigating care shortages.⁵ DACA recipients' significant contributions to economic activity are reflected in the more than \$5.6 billion in federal taxes and \$3.1 billion in state and local taxes they paid in 2020.⁶

Similarly to DACA, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) has provided long-term protection to hundreds of thousands of individuals from deportation to countries experiencing armed conflict, natural disasters, or other circumstances that make the return of those nationals dangerous. Like Dreamers and DACA recipients, TPS recipients are long-standing members of our communities and key employees of construction contractors, restaurants, and landscaping companies.⁷ According to the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, TPS workers contribute \$4.5 billion to our gross domestic product every year.⁸

DACA's and TPS's protections are not permanent, meaning beneficiaries live in a state of limbo. They are never sure if their work authorizations and humanitarian protections will be renewed or if a higher court will force the programs to end. While the courts have stayed recent decisions ending DACA, they have prevented more than one million individuals who would likely be eligible to participate in the program from applying.

Congress should not allow this uncertain situation to continue, and I'm encouraged there is bipartisan interest in finding a path forward. Providing Dreamers and TPS recipients with permanent legal status and a path to citizenship will uphold American values and preserve their contribution to our communities and economy. As such, I urge you to make passing such a bill a priority before the 117th Congress ends.

Sincerely,



Abigail D. Spanberger

Member of Congress

⁵ Center for American Progress, "What We Know About the Demographic and Economic Impacts of DACA Recipients: Spring 2020 Edition," April 6, 2020. Available at: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/know-demographic-economic-impacts-daca-recipients-spring-2020-edition/>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ American Immigration Council, "Workers with Temporary Protected Status in Key Industries and States," January 2019. Available at: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/workers-temporary-protected-status-key-industries-and-states>.

⁸ Immigration Legal Resource Center, "Economic Contributions by Salvadoran, Honduran, and Haitian TPS Holders," April 2017. Available at: https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/2017-04-18_economic_contributions_by_salvadoran_honduran_and_haitian_tps_holders.pdf.