

EQUALITY CALIFORNIA



September 1, 2017

Members of the California Congressional Delegation
US Congress
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Members of the California Congressional Delegation:

At a time when the President of the United States defiantly pardons a convicted racist sheriff and when chanting, torch-waving white nationalists openly march on a university campus, few are more vulnerable than the tens of thousands of Dreamers who are LGBTQ.

On behalf of our 800,000 members, Equality California asks you to protect our country's Dreamers by opposing the Administration's plan to end DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). It is unthinkable that these young people who are American in every way but their immigration status -- many of whom speak no other language than English and have never lived anywhere else -- would be deported to their parents' country of origin. Allowing current DACA holders to stay only as long as their work permit is eligible breaks the faith of those who applied for the program under the explicit understanding their status would be protected.

We greatly appreciate that Senators Feinstein and Harris are cosponsors of the Dream Act of 2017 (S. 1615), and we respectfully ask you to cosponsor its bipartisan companion bill (H.R. 3440), as well as another DACA bill, the American HOPE Act (H.R. 3591). By sharp contrast, we strongly oppose the 'Reforming American Immigration for a Strong Economy' (RAISE) Act, which would cut overall immigration by 50 percent over the next decade. The mean-spirited RAISE Act would also annually cap refugees at 50,000, many of whom are fleeing anti-LGBTQ persecution in their home countries, and eliminate the green card lottery, which has long been a means to increase immigration diversity.

And we ask you to urge US Attorney General Sessions to reject a threatened lawsuit by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and eight other states to rescind DACA by September 5.

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Immigration is a core issue for Equality California. Some 250,000 LGBTQ undocumented people live in California alone. They are members of our families, friends, partners, neighbors and coworkers, but exist in the shadows, living in fear of arrest, incarceration and deportation. The most vulnerable are those living with HIV/AIDS and who are transgender because they face extremely dangerous detention facilities, and arguably even greater danger if they are repatriated into their countries of origin -- many of which are hostile to gender non-conforming people and provide few resources to support the medically-fragile, including lifesaving HIV medications.

Policies hostile to immigrants tear families apart. The Williams Institute estimates that there are 113,300 people in same-sex relationships, in which one person is not an American citizen. Most vulnerable of all are more than 12,400 minor children of LGBTQ couples in which neither parent is a citizen.

Comprehensive immigration reform is clearly needed and long overdue. But in the interim, we urgently ask that you do all you can support Dreamers by defending the DACA program and by cosponsoring the two pending DACA bills.

Sincerely,



Rick Zbur
Executive Director



Valerie Ploumpis
National Policy Director

cc: Senator Dianne Feinstein

cc: Senator Kamala Harris