

Statement by the Justice & Diversity Center Urging Congress to Pass a Dream Act in Response to the Announced Repeal of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)

September 7, 2017 - San Francisco, California - The Justice & Diversity Center (JDC) of The Bar Association of San Francisco joins countless American public entities, non-profit organizations, bar associations, and businesses in imploring Congress to quickly end the political chaos and widespread panic created by the President's announcement that Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) will terminate in March 2018 unless Congress passes legislation to extend or replace the program. If Congress fails to act, the 800,000 young "Dreamers" who are now legally attending school and/or working and contributing to the growth of the U.S. economy (an estimated \$460 billion over the next decade) will face deportation.

The task for Congress is daunting in light of the rigid timeline, but the consequences of failing to act are grave. DACA was created in June 2012 to offer temporary legal status to youth who were brought to the United States by their parents; many of whom did not have a choice of whether or not to come. Despite the risk of deportation, they believed in America's promise that they would be able to stay in the United States by applying for DACA. As part of the DACA process, every one of the 800,000 Dreamers has passed a rigorous background check and is required to continue to comply with the rule of law in order to remain in deferred action.

These young men and women were raised and educated in the United States, growing up as Americans. Many have developed deep relationships with their families, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and as a community as a whole in the United States inspiring those around them with their presence. The values and traditions of America have shaped how they identify themselves along with their commitment to contribute to their communities in the United States. Many attend or have attended U.S. colleges and universities where they have flourished and enriched the lives of their classmates; many are gainfully employed by businesses that depend on them; and many have joined the U.S. military and defend American democracy abroad. Approximately 220,000 approved Dreamers are California residents.

The Trump administration has suggested that Congress may continue DACA as a trade-off for financing the building of a wall between the United States and Mexico and adopting additional aggressive immigration enforcement mechanisms. The issue of finding a solution for immigration enforcement and the existing DACA program that positively contributes to America are two completely different issues and should be addressed as such. JDC believes that Congress should address the need for immigration enforcement separately from DACA.

JDC urges Congress to pass legislation that eliminates the devastating uncertainty for DACA youth and offers a path to citizenship so that Dreamers, our communities, and our economy can thrive. It is not only possible, but desirable, for Congress to continue DACA while it separately considers a comprehensive immigration reform package to address the plethora of immigration issues. Any such comprehensive reform process may require a well thought-out plan and a

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significant amount of additional time than is available before the prompt deadline created by the President. A failure of Congress to act will be morally, economically and legally devastating and will have a long-lasting deleterious impact. Furthermore, it will undermine our collective confidence in government; it will divide communities and split up families; it will force young people who are in every sense American to leave the only country they call home; and it will cost our economy billions of dollars. Most sadly, it will demonstrate that America is a nation that does not value its youth and its future, nor does it live up to its promises.

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The Justice & Diversity Center (JDC) advances fairness and equality by providing pro bono legal services to low-income people and educational programs that foster diversity in the legal profession. JDC is the largest legal services provider in San Francisco. JDC's primary purpose is the delivery of free legal services to low-income San Franciscans, as well as the non-profits that serve them. JDC delivers free legal services through its Legal Services Programs division, which consists of the Pro Bono Legal Services Program, Homeless Advocacy Project, and the Immigration Program. JDC provides enrichment programs to diverse youth and young adults through its Diversity Educational Programs. JDC's programs serve approximately 9,500 disadvantaged San Franciscans a year, with the overarching goal of assisting the community's most vulnerable members with accessing the judicial system and strengthening their personal, professional, and economic security.