



**Legal Services Center
Policy Dispatch**
October 2020



A MESSAGE FROM OUR MANAGING ATTORNEY FOR POLICY

The last three and a half years have taught us that we cannot fully meet the needs of our clients without also addressing the structural injustices of our immigration system. The Door's Legal Services Center is proud to announce the launch of our Policy and Advocacy Portfolio. We will be engaging in broad ranging strategic litigation, policy advocacy, research and writing to escalate our calls for justice and elevate the issues impacting our clients' rights and lives. Our commitment is to always amplifying the voices of the young people we serve in this work, and advocating alongside them. We inaugurate this work with our first policy dispatch on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) program, highlighting the words of our DACAmented client, Luciana. To receive further updates on our work, please sign up here:

In Solidarity, Rachel L. Davidson, Esq.

DACA POLICY DISPATCH

September 30, 2020. New York, NY. The Door's Legal Services Center publishes the call to action of our client, Luciana S., and issues this dispatch in response to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) defiance of the United States Supreme Court's June 18, 2020 decision [in Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California](#), which declared the Trump Administration's 2017 attempt to end the DACA program unlawful.

Remarkably, USCIS' response to this ruling was to issue a [statement](#) saying, "Today's court opinion has no basis in law and merely delays the President's lawful ability to end the illegal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals amnesty program". On July 28, 2020 DHS issued "[The Wolf Memo](#)", detailing its response to the ruling. On August 24, 2020 [USCIS directed the agency](#) to reject all new DACA applications, return all new and pre-August 24th advance parole requests, and shorten DACA renewal periods to one year.

The Door has represented thousands of DACAmented young people since the program's inception. We stand in solidarity with DACAmented youth now. The behavior of this administration in violating the ruling of the highest court in the United States raises grave concerns about the rule of law in our country. The Door calls on USCIS to immediately begin accepting new DACA and advance parole applications, and to honor the standard DACA 2-year work authorization period that has existed since the program's inception. The shortening of this renewal period forces DACAmented youth and legal services providers to pay DHS double the fees for an equivalent period of work authorization and underscores the precarity of DACAmented youth's status in this country. The Door calls on Congress to immediately come together to create a permanent pathway to legal permanent residence for DACAmented youth and work towards just and comprehensive immigration reform.

My American Dream Deferred *By Luciana S.*

Every night this spring I laid in bed, anxiously scrolling through the latest immigration news as I awaited the Supreme Court's DACA decision. I was preparing myself for the possibility that the next

morning, my life would be forever changed. The fate of 700,000 dreamers like myself hung in the balance.

The morning of June 18, I constantly refreshed the Supreme Court decisions website on my phone. At 10:07 am, a surprising decision awaited me: DACA lives! I breathed a sigh of relief for the first time in a while. I cried tears of joy and felt as though everything was right with the world. I Facetimed my boyfriend and we rejoiced a momentous day. I celebrated the tenacity of my fellow Dreamers who fought this battle and won!

As my attorney and I parsed through the decision together, however, it became clear that the implications of the decision were not that simple. The court essentially determined that an administration that has openly said they don't want me here has the right to declare me and my status unlawful, so long as they weigh more carefully how much the lives of my fellow Dreamers and I depend on DACA against their so called "policy" reasons. Since June this administration has been working on just that, issuing a memo on August 24, 2020 in defiance of the Supreme Court denying all new DACA and advance parole applications and shrinking work authorization renewals from 2 to 1-year periods.

Here's what the government should "weigh" as they work daily to deport me: I have felt American every single day I have lived in this country. I'm a Queens girl and have been for my entire conscious life. I moved to Jackson Heights from Peru at age 5 and was raised in Kew Gardens and Forest Hills, where I still live. I'm 22 years old, and a Quantitative Economics student at CUNY-Queens College. As a DACA recipient, I'm not eligible for Federal financial aid, so I've worked as a waitress and now as a paralegal to pay for school. This summer, I was accepted into the prestigious Goldman Sachs Insight Series. My dream is to work on the tech side of financial analysis. I've paid taxes in the US since I was 18. Anyone who meets me thinks of me as a hard-working American girl. And in the precious moments when I am able to forget the fear and panic the precariousness of my status generates, that's how I think of myself.

Leading up to this summer's Supreme Court decision, I felt increasingly dispirited, as though no amount of my hard work or accomplishments would ever make me a welcome contributor to American society, or a valid citizen in the eyes of this Administration. My very existence in this country, the space I take up, the air I breathe is constantly up for debate in the courts of law and public opinion. This is the reality of being undocumented —the pure antithesis of the American dream. I have worked hard, applied myself, and in the end – despite the Supreme Court's decision – I may still have to go into exile to a country I have no memory of, leaving my home, my community, my boyfriend, my friends, my job and the familiarity of Queens' streets all behind so long as the government is more careful about how they end DACA and so long as Congress does nothing.

I love America. This is my home. I do not believe America is better off without me and the other 700,000 DACA recipients. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, my fellow Dreamers have been putting their lives at risk for the benefit of the American people as nurses, paramedics, doctors, and other frontline workers. We are ready to die serving this country. Shouldn't that make us citizens?

In June the Supreme Court tried to prevent this Administration from enacting its cruel attempt to rescind my rights and my life here while also giving the government another opportunity to do just that. Since then the administration has taken that opportunity and run with it.

But if the last few months have shown me anything, it is that the American people can come together to defend the lives of those who have been failed by legal systems and administrations past and present and that Congress has the power to make things right. I invite you to join me in my "march" to the US Capitol to push our legislators to wake up and turn what is now less and less of a win into

an American Dream. The 700,000 other Dreamers and I need you. Congress must transform DACA into a true pathway to citizenship or you must vote them out. After all, if you are a citizen you have the right to do just that.