

Open letter to University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Patrick Gallagher

RE: Action needed to defend human rights of immigrants and DACA program

Date: January 30, 2018

Dear Chancellor Gallagher:

We call on the University of Pittsburgh to develop a responsible action plan and public statement supporting students, employees, and residents affected by President Trump's efforts to end the DACA program and deport undocumented immigrants. DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) provides two-year relief from removal proceedings and deportation for undocumented immigrants who entered the country as minors ("dreamers"), and makes recipients eligible for study and employment authorization. There are some 700,000 DACA recipients nation-wide including nearly 6,000 in Pennsylvania.

Universities across the country took action against the government's September 5, 2017 announcement that the DACA program will be dismantled within six months.¹ Time is almost up. The University of Pittsburgh needs to act now and follow through with its September 5 tweet to DACA Students saying, "We're here for you and join the rising tide of voices who are calling on Congress to make this right."² Stand with the City of Pittsburgh and Mayor Peduto who on January 8, 2018 declared,

DACA recipients, and residents that are affected by the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) changes, are our friends, our classmates, our neighbors, our colleagues, and are our fellow Yinzers. In 2018 we aim to be more welcoming than ever before, and that goes beyond our local government and our Welcoming Pittsburgh initiatives... [it includes urging residents to contact their Representative or Senator in Congress and] tell them to pass a clean DREAM Act now.³

Stand with the Pittsburgh Public School system, which one year ago passed a resolution declaring itself a sanctuary campus that protects student data, restricts access by immigration agents, and offers a "safe and supportive school environment" for all.⁴

Ending DACA means U.S. residents lose study and work authorizations and may face deportation, while undocumented residents may never be able to legalize their status. Since September 5, all new DACA applications have been prohibited, and since October all DACA renewals have been prohibited for those whose temporary status is expiring. Nationwide an estimated 122 DACA recipients per day have seen their permits expire since September. This will increase to about 1,000 per day after March 5, 2018 when the program officially ends.⁵

Without public pressure and local support, all people affected by DACA are unlikely to see a timely solution. This January a Federal Judge ruling blocked government efforts to prevent DACA recipients from status renewal while legal challenges proceed through the courts, but President Trump launched an appeal.⁶ Days later, the President made racist remarks during a failed meeting on immigration with members of Congress. Congress then failed to address DACA, despite its centrality to debates that precipitated a three-day government shutdown.⁷ With Senate next expected to vote on immigration by mid-February,⁸ DACA recipients and the undocumented need practical help and vocal political support right now.

We believe in “Dreamers” and call on the University of Pittsburgh to take action in line with its strongly held values. Last year, when President Trump issued an executive order suspending immigration from seven Muslim countries, Chancellor Gallagher declared:

the University of Pittsburgh is built on a foundation of values that rejects discrimination and embraces diversity as essential to the tasks of education and discovery. Our University’s remarkable success story has been written by individuals who came from all over the world—by men and women who shared all types of religious beliefs. They came to Pittsburgh to learn, to teach, to discover, and to serve. Without question, we are a better university because of them. In the coming days, we will continue to work with the Administration and with Congress to share our profound concerns over these changes and to reaffirm our values and our position that education and discovery are enhanced through robust global engagement.

In the same spirit, we call on the University administration to do the right thing and take action against another devastating immigration policy change affecting the lives of our students, employees and residents. The University of Pittsburgh should offer support in the following ways:

- Publicly condemn the dismantling of DACA and failure to pass a clean Dream Act.
- Pressure Congress to create a long-term solution in the form of legislation to protect “Dreamers,” and inform members of the University community about how they too can contact their Representative or Senator in Congress to demand action.
- Announce timely legal and counseling support for students, employees and their families who are DACA recipients or undocumented immigrants.
- Educate University of Pittsburgh students and employees on the situation more generally, and offer “Know Your Rights” information sessions.
- Educate campus police, university faculty and staff regarding the circumstances and legality of withholding student information from immigration officials and prohibiting such officials from entering university buildings.
- Promote a safe and supportive campus community for all students, regardless of immigration status, and investigate reports of harassment thoroughly and efficiently.
- Work with student organizations to facilitate the creation of an anonymous support group for DACA recipients and undocumented members of the University of Pittsburgh.
- Create a scholarship fund to provide financial aid to DACA students who lose their work permits.

Submitted by:

The University of Pittsburgh’s [Human Rights Working Group](#),* in association with
The [Pittsburgh Human Rights City Alliance](#).

*We invite other campus groups to endorse this statement by sending an email to pghrights@riseup.net.
We will send an updated letter to the Chancellor including names of additional supporters.*

***University of Pittsburgh Human Rights Working Group**

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Notes

¹ *Chronicle of Higher Education*, “What Major Universities Had to Say About Trump’s Move to Roll Back DACA,” September 5, 2017. At <https://www.chronicle.com/article/What-Major-Universities-Had-to/241095>. For a repository of Universities’ official letters and action plans on DACA, see <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B6M-yjO5suXEanFWY3IONUo5bFk>

² The tweet was issued by Chancellor Gallagher. On this and other Pittsburgh region responses, see Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, “Leaders and Dreamers in Pittsburgh Region React to Trump administration’s decision to end DACA,” September 5, 2017, at: <http://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2017/09/05/Pittsburgh-Dreamers-reaction-DACA-Casa-San-Jose-President-Donald-Trump/stories/201709050116>

³ Press Release: Mayor William Peduto Urges Action on DREAM Act. January 8, 2018. <http://pittsburghpa.gov/press-releases/press-releases.html?id=1352>

⁴ Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, “Pittsburgh Public Schools Declares Itself ‘Sanctuary’ Campus,” January 25, 2017. <http://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2017/01/25/Pittsburgh-Public-Schools-declares-itself-sanctuary-campus/stories/201701250214>

⁵ Huffington Post, “More than 180 Protesters Arrested At Rally For Dreamers As Congress Drags Its Feet”, December 6, 2017, at https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/dreamers-protest-arrests-luis-gutierrez_us_5a287a60e4b0b185e5393969)

⁶ NPR, “Federal Judge Temporarily Blocks Trump’s Decision to End DACA,” January 9, 2018 at <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/01/10/576963434/federal-judge-temporarily-blocks-trumps-decision-to-end-daca>

⁷ New York Times, “Hopes Dim for DACA Deal As Lawmakers Battle Over Trump’s Immigration Remarks”, January 14, 2018 at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/14/us/politics/david-perdue-trump-shithole.html>;

⁸ *Washington Post*, “Latino Activists and Lawmakers Critical of Reopening Government Without ‘Dreamer’ Solution,” January 22, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/01/22/latino-activists-and-lawmakers-critical-of-reopening-government-without-dreamer-solution/?utm_term=.5b641137a4f2