

# Congress needs to create a pathway to residency for Dreamers

Dreamers have established their roots in the United States, attending school, working, and raising families for years. Congress must pass a permanent solution that provides Dreamers with certainty and allows them to maximize their contributions to this nation.

## Background

It's been over [20 years](#) since Congress first attempted to pass a solution for children brought to the U.S. lacking legal status. The Obama Administration's 2014 enactment of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) provided temporary protection for many such children, but Congress has failed to deliver a permanent legislative solution.

As of September 2021, [610,000 people](#) were enrolled in DACA. The [average enrollee](#) arrived in 1999 at the age of 7, and 85 percent of them arrived before their teenage years. More than 75 percent of enrollees are currently in the workforce. Additionally, more than 400,000 U.S. citizen children have at least one parent enrolled in DACA, and 90,000 U.S. citizen adults are married to an enrollee.

Although DACA has enabled many people to work and attend school without the fear of deportation, their lives are currently in limbo. Due to a recent [district court decision](#), USCIS is not accepting new DACA applicants, and the program could eventually be rescinded for everyone. If Congress fails to act, half a million U.S. citizens could have a parent or spouse removed. DACA enrollees would also lose their ability to legally work, harming thousands of U.S. families and businesses and jeopardize the net \$3.4 billion in taxes and \$42 billion in GDP that DACA recipients [contribute](#) each year. Despite support from [85 percent](#) of Americans, including almost 75 percent of Republicans, Congress has yet to pass such a solution.

## Policy Solutions

- Pass legislation that grants Dreamers the opportunity to eventually earn permanent residency based on their length of residence in the US; employment, school enrollment, or military service; and lack of a serious criminal record.
- Include border security provisions to disincentivize future unlawful crossings and visa overstays. For example, the [2018 Immigration Security and Opportunity Act](#) created a pathway to residency for certain undocumented childhood entrants, while also increasing funding for border security.

### Contact:

Josselin Castillo, Federal Affairs Liaison - [jcastillo@afphq.org](mailto:jcastillo@afphq.org)

Jordan Fischetti, Policy Fellow - [jfischetti@afphq.org](mailto:jfischetti@afphq.org)