



Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner  
Director, Religious Action Center

Isabel P. Dunst, Chair  
Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism

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President Barack Obama  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

December 1, 2016

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the Union for Reform Judaism, whose over 900 congregations across North America encompass over 1.5 million Reform Jews, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, which represents over 2,000 Reform rabbis, I strongly urge you to protect all those who applied or participated in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, and who may now be at increased risk of deportation.

Your 2012 executive order creating DACA recognized the urgency of addressing the more than 700,000 undocumented immigrants, known as DREAMers, who were brought to the United States as children. These young people have grown up here and want to give back to society and raise their own families in the only nation they know as home. This deferred action, using rigorous criteria to replace the threat of deportation with a work visa, allows DREAMers to come out of the shadows and participate in our society. While DACA does not offer a pathway to citizenship or legal immigration status, for which many DREAMers might be eligible, it does focus law enforcement's attention on undocumented immigrants who are more likely to pose threats to the United States.

In the waning weeks of your administration, participants in and applicants to DACA are in a vulnerable state. Their names and contact information are now known to the federal government, and if the succeeding administration seeks to deport all undocumented immigrants as was stated during the campaign, the DACA program provides a robust list. DREAMers are a unique population: they are undocumented through no fault of their own, having arrived here as children and having grown up in the United States, and could be deported to a country they do not know or remember. For them to face removal from the United States because they sought legal channels to work and contribute to society is the height of injustice. I urge you take swift action to protect DACA participants and applicants from deportation.

Jewish tradition is clear on the treatment of immigrants. Leviticus commands, "When strangers sojourn with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong. The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (19:33-34). This teaching permeates Jewish tradition and is echoed 35 times in the Torah – the most repeated of any commandment. Our own people's history as "strangers" reminds us of the many struggles faced by immigrants today, and we affirm our commitment to create the same opportunities for today's immigrants that were so valuable to our own community not so many years ago.



*The Religious Action Center pursues social justice and religious liberty by mobilizing the Jewish community and serving as its advocate in Washington, D.C. The Center is led by the Commission on Social Action of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union for Reform Judaism (and its affiliates) and is supported by the congregations of the Union.*



I urge you to use the power of your office to protect DREAMers and ensure our nation lives up to its proud history as a nation of immigrants.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonah D. Pesner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner

Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism