



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

J. HERBERT NELSON, II
STATED CLERK

October 26, 2017

Dear Members of Congress,

As the top elected ecclesial officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a denomination of 1.5 million members, I write urging you to pass a clean DREAM Act before the end of this session. We are a denomination that supports immigrants and their children, understanding that we are called to minister to, advocate with, and be in solidarity with those who live on the margins, those who are the most vulnerable. The General Assembly of the PC(USA), the highest decision-making body consisting of elected representatives, presents a witness for truth and justice in our community and in the world community. It sets priorities for the church and meets every two years. In 2012, the General Assembly encouraged presbyteries, congregations, and individual Presbyterians to partner with religious, business, community, and law enforcement leaders for legislative reform at the federal level on “actively advocating for legislation such as the DREAM Act (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) that offers hope for young migrants by providing a pathway to citizenship.”¹ We know that this legislative decision reflects the goodness of the core values of the United States of America, too.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) provided a glimpse of how successful the legislative decision would be across the board. It would benefit more than 1 million young people. It would benefit employers. It would benefit families. It would benefit churches and religious institutions. It would benefit higher educational institutions. It would benefit local communities and the country. Sending dedicated, invested young people back underground does not make us safer. It does not make the U.S. better. Offering a pathway to citizenship, in fact, is the best solution to a problem we have let worsen for far too long.

Our church is also a direct beneficiary of Dreamers. They are members in our churches. They offer their gifts to local, regional, and national bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). As I have served in many capacities for the denomination, I have preached to, counseled with, and prayed with people from many walks of life. Each one of them was nothing other than a child of God. These young people present a deeper reflection of the image of God. They bring additional elements of God’s love, grace, and mercy to our congregations.

As expressed in the book of Genesis, we can learn from Joseph’s dreams². He was forced to another land. He adopted that land as his own. He labored to save them. His gifts were a gift to his adoptive home. Dreamers today bring that same energy and vigor. Even if not every undocumented youth succeeds in a traditional sense, they

¹ The 220th General Assembly (2012) in “On Taking Action Concerning the Plight, and Contributions of Immigrant People [Both Documented and Undocumented] in Our Country, Neighborhoods, and Communities of Faith.” *Minutes*, 2012, Part I, p. 1140, electronic version).

² Genesis 37–50.

have struggled intensely to strive despite laws that unfairly burden and exclude them from society. We have heard the clamor of voices in the Dreamers' movement. They have not stood by and waited for change. These individuals understand what it means to be active citizens participating and exercising their own agency. They understand and live out democracy. I urge you to respond positively in passing a clean Dream Act, which reflects how much we commend this community and reflects how important their contributions are to this nation.

In the faith we share,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Herbert Nelson, II". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)