

March 7, 2017

The Honorable John F. Kelly  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Kelly,

We, the undersigned, write to ask that you take action immediately to stop the deportation of all detained immigrant youth, particularly DACA recipients Daniela Vargas and Daniel Ramirez, who could be removed from the country they have called home since a young age, any day now.

We are deeply concerned about the cases of Daniela Vargas, Daniel Ramirez, Edwin Romero, and Josue Romero, four DACA recipients who have been arrested and detained by ICE officials. These enforcement actions appear at odds with President Trump's assurances that individuals with DACA should not worry about deportation.<sup>1</sup> We would like to hear from you directly whether or not the Department of Homeland Security plans to honor President Trump's statements expressing his support for DACA recipients.

Within days of taking the presidential oath, President Trump promised DACA participants that they "shouldn't be very worried" and that he was going to "take care of everybody."<sup>2</sup> On February 16, President Trump promised once again that his administration would show "great heart" with DACA children and acknowledged they were some "absolutely, incredible kids."<sup>3</sup> During your confirmation hearing, you stated you would "keep an open mind" with regards to children with DACA. Yet, the recent actions of the Department of Homeland Security indicate that the Department is targeting certain DACA individuals for enforcement.

Only six weeks into the Trump administration, ICE officers have detained at least four DACA recipients. On Wednesday, ICE agents detained Daniela Vargas who was in the process of renewing her DACA application. Even though her father and brother had recently been arrested by ICE officers, she was not afraid to speak out. At a recent press conference she said: "Today my father and brother await deportation, while I continue to fight this battle as a dreamer to help contribute to this country which I feel that is very much my country." According to press reports, shortly after she made this brave statement, ICE officers took her into custody.<sup>4</sup> And, because she entered the country as a young child with her family on the Visa Waiver Program, we are hearing reports that she is being processed for imminent deportation, without due process.

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<sup>1</sup> ABC World News Tonight, [Interview with David Muir](#), January 25, 2017

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> NYT, [Full Transcript and Video: Trump News Conference](#), February 16, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Washington Post, [ICE Nabs Young DREAMer Applicant After She Speaks Out at a News Conference](#), March 2, 2017.

In Seattle, Washington, ICE officers detained Daniel Ramirez, a 23-year old DACA recipient and the father of a three-year-old US citizen.<sup>5</sup> Just last week, Edwin Romero, another DACA recipient, was jailed for 15 hours and faced removal over unpaid traffic tickets.<sup>6</sup> Josue Romero was detained in Texas before being ultimately released to his parents.<sup>7</sup> These recent activities indicate an alarming pattern within the Department of Homeland Security, and have already created a chilling effect in immigrant communities. Taken together, these do not appear to be random actions, but rather they point to a shift in Department policy to target DACA recipients for enforcement actions.

Individuals with DACA contribute to the United States in powerful social and economic ways. They start businesses at twice the rate of the American public as a whole. They are economic consumers who purchase big-ticket items like their first homes and cars. Not only are they making the United States economically stronger, but they also work in large numbers in educational and health services, giving back to the country they love.<sup>8</sup> Detaining these individuals not only runs counter to President Trump's assurances, but these actions also make the economy weaker and waste valuable agency resources on individuals who present no danger to our community.

As Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, immigration enforcement falls under your purview and as a result, the decisions on immigration arrest, detention, and deportation lie with you. We respectfully ask that you immediately halt the deportations of Daniela Vargas, Daniel Ramirez, and any other Dreamers in your custody and release them back to their families and community.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Deepak Bhargava, President, Center for Community Change

Angela Glover Blackwell, CEO, PolicyLink

Cornell William Brooks, President and CEO, NAACP

Michael Brune, Executive Director, Sierra Club

Rea Carey, Executive Director, National LGBTQ Task Force

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<sup>5</sup> CBS News, [Seattle 'Dreamer' Will Stay in Custody, Judge Rules](#), February 17, 2017

<sup>6</sup> Star Telegram, [Dallas County 'Dreamer's' arrest puts scare in immigration-rights community](#), February 22, 2017

<sup>7</sup> Jason Buch, [One-time DACA recipient facing deportation in S.A. released](#), mySA, February 17, 2017

<sup>8</sup> Tom Wong, NILC, UWD, CAP, [New Study of DACA Beneficiaries Shows Positive Economic and Educational Outcomes](#), October 18, 2016

Andrew Friedman, Co-Executive Director, Center for Popular Democracy

Lily Eskelsen García, President, National Education Association

Olivia Golden, Executive Director, Center for Law and Social Policy

Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO, Anti-Defamation League (ADL)

Chad Griffin, President, Human Rights Campaign

Mary Kay Henry, International President, Service Employees International Union

Marielena Hincapié, Executive Director, National Immigration Law Center

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María Teresa Kumar, President and CEO, Voto Latino

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Anthony D. Romero, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union

Neera Tanden, President and CEO, Center for American Progress

Randi Weingarten, President, American Federation of Teachers

John C. Yang, President and Executive Director, Asian Americans Advancing Justice-AAJC