

Immigration Reform Lobbying Speech

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My name is Sophie Milner-Gorvine (she/her), and I'm a senior at Evanston Township High School. My name is Matea Goldfarb (they/them), and I'm a freshman at Evanston Township High School. My name is Zoe Kaufman (she/her), and I'm a senior at Evanston Township High School. We are all members of Beth Emet Synagogue in Evanston and representatives from the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. Today we would like to speak with you about immigration reform.

Starting in Kindergarten, I was a part of a dual-language program of English and Spanish. The program was 50% native Spanish-speaking students, many of whom were first-generation Americans or undocumented immigrants. In first grade, three of my classmates disappeared without a word. Being a naive first-grader, these disappearances didn't make me question their cause. In 5th grade, we had a conversation about deportations because ICE invasions were on the rise. Amidst this heavy topic, I heard the self-proclaimed class clown break down crying next to me. When I turned to ask him what was wrong, he told me through tears that he didn't want to get deported. My heart shattered and I was at loss for words. At that moment, I realized where all my disappearing classmates had gone. (PAUSE).

This program introduced me to the horrific reality of thousands of immigrants who live in constant fear of suddenly being ripped away from those they love and the place they call home. The DACA program allowed for 800,000 undocumented immigrant youth to live in America, contributing to society without fear of deportation. Due to the Trump administration's attempts to end DACA and the chaos that ensued after this action, new undocumented immigrants and current DREAMers lived horrified that they wouldn't be protected by the government. These children that were just trying to learn alongside me were forced to face the repercussions of actions that were out of their control. Although the United States must value keeping the American people safe, it is also essential to recognize the humanity of immigrants and the innocence and vulnerability of immigrant youth. While this issue has come to the forefront in recent years, conflicts surrounding immigration into the United States have existed for centuries.

In 1961 my grandparents emigrated to the United States, escaping antisemitism and violence in their home country of Argentina. They worked hard, got citizenship and eventually settled in southern California. However, Argentina became more and more unsafe for Jews over the years, and though my grandparents were legal immigrants, they were still latine; they knew their citizenship, even with a green card, could be revoked much quicker than their white counterparts, with or without reason. Returning to Argentina meant constant fear and vigilance, for them and their family. What could have helped my grandparents, and thousands of other documented and

undocumented immigrants across the country, is TPS, or temporary protected status. Created in 1990, TPS enables all immigrants to find work and be exempt from deportation if their country of origin is deemed too unsafe to return to. It has saved countless lives, and can continue to do so if the act is passed.

Being a country that was built from the success of immigrants, it is important that we protect the lives and rights of immigrants in the United States. Furthermore, no one should have to live with the uncertainty of their life being suddenly turned upside down by abrupt and constantly changing policies. In many cases, the United States is the only place DREAMers know as home, and they shouldn't face removal from their "normal." In addition, TPS recipients need residence in the US to be safe from the conditions of their home country, but since TPS is a temporary solution and leaves hundreds of thousands of people subject to ever-changing policies, uncertain of their future, it's also necessary that there is a path to citizenship for them. DREAMers, TPS recipients, and other immigrants are valuable members of our society dedicated to giving back to the US and raising their own families, emulating traditional American values such as independence, equality, and self-determination. They deserve legislation that will protect their livelihoods and ensure their equal treatment for the benefits to which they provide America.

As a member of the reform Jewish community, all of my great-grandparents, similarly to thousands of other Jews in the US, were immigrants fleeing antisemitism in Eastern Europe. As a community that's been greatly impacted by immigration, the Union for Reform Judaism is dedicated to supporting a fair, equitable, and non-discriminatory legal immigration policy for the United States. The American Dream and Promise Act (HR6) is a great solution. I urge the Senator to support this act when it is introduced in the Senate to ensure there is a permanent legislative fix providing DREAMers and TPS holders a pathway to citizenship. I ask that they continue to support a clean bill with no added enforcement measures or funding for a border wall.

Thank you for listening. We appreciate your time! Have a great rest of your day!