

One Oregon united in support of immigrant youths, families

Crueled, immoral, vindictive, racist, pandering – all words used to describe the White House decision to repeal DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

They're all correct, and the rising outrage to the decision reaffirms how disconnected these hateful policies are from the people of Portland and elsewhere in our nation.

The decision gives Congress six months – until March 5 – to come up with another immigration policy to replace DACA. If history offers any lesson, as it always

does, we've no reason to be optimistic.

Without any legal necessity and with blatant political motivation, the White House looked past the human and environmental tragedies affecting swaths of this nation right now to attack some of the best and brightest – and most vulnerable – youths in our country.

DACA was enacted five years ago by President Barack Obama to give undocumented immigrants who entered the country as minors the opportunity to stay under renewable two-year permits. More than 800,000

immigrant youths have been allowed to remain in the United States, attend school and receive work permits under the DACA policies. While it can be renewed, deferred action does not confer citizenship or create permanent legal status.

There are nearly 11,000 DACA recipients in Oregon.

Contrary to the rhetoric often used to justify racist and anti-immigration actions, this isn't about public safety. The DACA repeal does nothing to address issues of criminal activity or of removing criminal

offenders who are in this country illegally.

DACA youths have to pass a rigorous background check. Any criminal record, from a felony down to multiple nonsignificant misdemeanors, is grounds for an automatic refusal for DACA status. According to the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, any criminal history is subject to discretionary denial, such as gang membership and juvenile delinquency. Applicants must submit biometric and biographic information, which is run through federal databases, including the Department of Homeland Security.

In Portland, and across Oregon, the repeal has been denounced by academic, religious and business leaders. Companies and universities say they will not turn over their workers and students for deportation. Oregon has joined 14 other states, as of press time, now suing the Trump

administration over the repeal.

Furthermore, Oregon has a 30-year-old standard for distinguishing public safety and immigration policy. Law enforcement agencies are prohibited by state law from using money, equipment or personnel to arrest or incarcerate people whose only violation is for federal immigration laws. That law was put in place in 1987 to end – you guessed it – the discriminatory targeting of Latinos in Oregon.

But, much like existing and legally challenged efforts elsewhere, a fight is brewing in Oregon to essentially put local police officers to work for federal immigration authorities.

Multnomah County officials and state organizations are working to get ahead of a proposed ballot measure that would open the door for an immigration crackdown similar to recent legislation in Texas and Arizona.

Oregonians for Immigration Reform, or OFIR, is currently collecting signatures to create a ballot measure that would repeal Oregon state law that limits local law enforcement involvement in federal immigration policy. OFIR has been identified by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a nativist extremist group.

Initiative Proposal 22 is expected to collect the 88,000 signatures needed to be on the November 2018 ballot.

That state law exists to protect the civil liberties of individuals that are inalienable regardless of federal politics around immigration. Multnomah County Sheriff Mike Reese, formerly the chief of police for the Portland Police Bureau, is strongly in favor of preserving the state law, as are law enforcement authorities across the state.

Everyone, regardless of their immigration status, is protected under the U.S. Constitution, with the right to be free from discrimination and

unlawful actions. That's what we stand for. That's what we'll fight for.

For 16 years, numerous versions of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors – or DREAM Act – which would give undocumented youths a path to legal status, has languished in congressional limbo. Despite the fear-mongering tactics in its approach, Congress still has the chance to do the right thing and pass this legislation.

You can get involved. One Oregon is a coalition of more than 80 organizations, including Street Roots, dedicated to immigration rights, social justice and the environment. The coalition organized to protect our state against anti-immigration and anti-Muslim policies. Go to the One Oregon website, oneoregon.org, to learn more about the issues, get engaged through events and forums, and learn what you can do today.

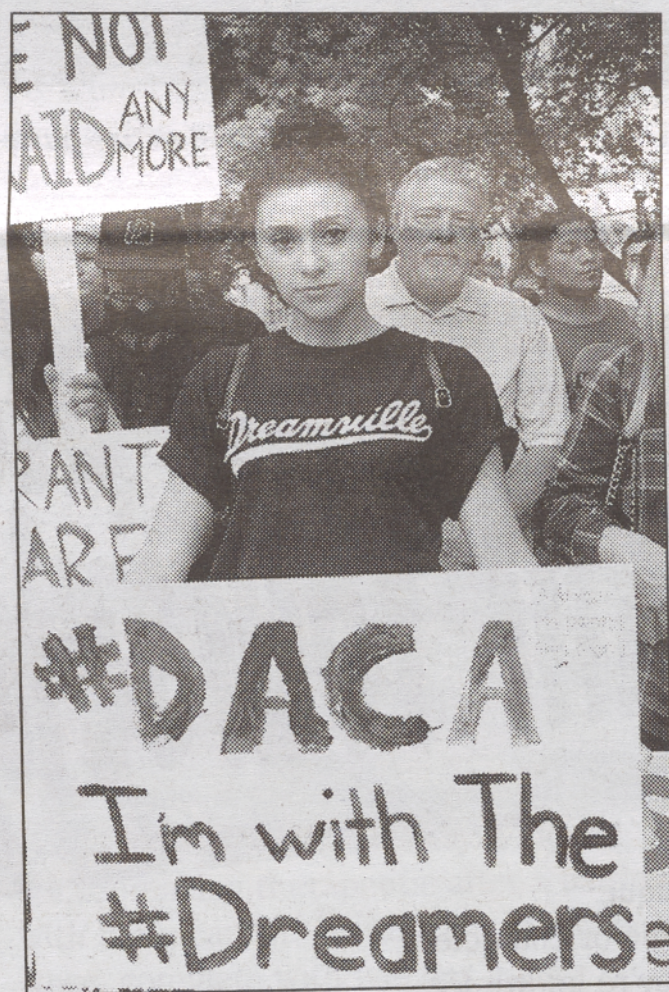
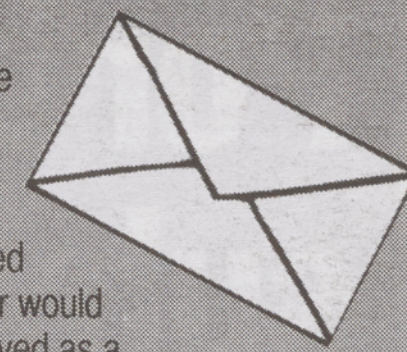


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