



NAKASEC
 미주한인봉사교육단체협의회
 NATIONAL KOREAN AMERICAN
 SERVICE & EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

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Obama Administration Takes Courageous Steps to Protect DREAM Students

On early Friday morning, the Administration made an announcement to protect 800,000 undocumented young people from deportation and to create a mechanism for them to seek work permits. This policy recognizes the contributions, promise, and importance of undocumented young people, nearly 1 in 10 of whom are Asian American and Pacific Islanders.

“For over a decade, led by the strength, conviction, and energy of DREAM students, our community has organized and advocated for the day that youth do not have to live in fear of deportation. This announcement by the Administration is a tremendous step that will allow all young people in this country to build a future and achieve an education in the country they call home,” said Morna Ha, executive director of NAKASEC. “We need to continue pressing for a path to legalization for undocumented students and broader immigration reform for their families, but today, the Administration has acted in the best interest of the country and our community.”

Ju Hong, an undocumented student and NAKASEC youth leader from Northern California said, “I first found out about this announcement when my friends texted me early in the morning, then I saw it all over Facebook. I was so excited, I almost burst into tears. I have lived in fear of being separated from my friends, my family. Today, I feel liberated from my fears at least temporarily. This policy change could allow me to better focus on my school work, provide for my family, and continue to fight for the DREAM Act and immigration reform.”

SikSon, executive director of the Korean American Resource and Cultural Center in Chicago added: “While this is a major victory for the immigrant community, we will remain vigilant so that the policy’s implementation is swift. Current efforts to grant administrative relief for immigrants have been inconsistent at best. But we will work with the Department of Homeland Security and with our partners and allies across the country to make sure that this initiative is successful.”

Angela Kim, an undocumented youth and leader with the Korean Resource Center’s youth group Alliance for Korean American Students in Action said, “It all still feels very unreal and I have to see how the policies actually work, but I am hopeful that with this announcement, my friends and I will be able to fulfill our dreams. I majored in psychology and want to work in the field, but it has been difficult to get a job because of my status. The potential to receive relief and a work permit feels like shackles have started to lift and I am one step closer to pursuing a career I have been studying so hard for.”

“Ultimately, we need a more permanent solution to our nation’s badly broken immigration system. We need Congress to also act and move legislation like the DREAM Act that provides path to legalization and includes those who are older than the current age limits. Parents should also be given an opportunity to stay and work in this country through broader comprehensive immigration reform. During this critical election year, we will make sure that our elected officials know this and will make our voices heard at the ballot box,” said Dae Joong Yoon, executive director of the Korean Resource Center.

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Under today's announcement, undocumented young people who arrived in the U.S. before age 16, are younger than 30, have been in the country for at least five continuous years, have no criminal history, graduated from a U.S. high school or earned a GED, or served in the military will be considered for deferred action for 2 years and immune to deportation. These individuals may also be eligible for work permits. While this policy will not lead to a path to legalization, it will remove the threat of deportation and grant the ability to work and remain in the country.

On a case by case basis, undocumented students who meet the eligibility requirements can come forward to be considered for deferred action. Deferred action will be granted for 2 years with possible renewal and individuals may also be eligible for work permits. Additionally, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Patrol have been directed to halt the apprehension and deportation of all DREAM eligible youth.

More information on the new policy can be found on DHS's website, www.dhs.gov. Beginning Monday, individuals can also call USCIS' hotline at [1-800-375-5283](tel:1-800-375-5283) or ICE's hotline at [1-888-351-4024](tel:1-888-351-4024) during business hours with questions or to request more information on the forthcoming process. Additional information and assistance will be made available at the Korean Resource Center at 323-937-3718 and the Korean American Resource and Cultural Center at 773-588-9158.

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