



Ladies of Charity of the United States of America[®]
Advocacy Committee
ISSUE PAPER: Dreamers and DACA

Background:

For over 18 years, the Catholic Church has urged Congress to put forth and pass a common sense and just legislative solution for Dreamers, young people who were brought to the U.S. by their parents. In the previous administration, the Dreamers were granted temporary protection by Executive Order known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). The purpose of DACA was to utilize prosecutorial discretion to provide undocumented persons who were brought to the United States when they were children with temporary relief from deportation (deferred action) and work authorization. The status expires after two years, subject to renewal.

This executive order was repealed by an executive order in the present administration. Then the Federal Court issued an injunction halting the repeal of DACA and the matter is moving through the Federal Courts. We believe that a legislative solution is the only way forward and the legislation must:

- (1) be bipartisan,
- (2) provide Dreamers with a path to citizenship,
- (3) be pro-family,
- (4) protect the vulnerable; and
- (5) be respectful of human dignity with regard to border security and enforcement.

At the 2017 Assembly in Kansas City, Mo, the Ladies of Charity adopted a resolution committed to education and advocacy on behalf of the Dreamers. We have struggled to keep abreast of an issue that has bounced forward and backward as the dreamers were tossed and turned in the Congress and the Federal Courts, with little advancement to the goal of a pathway to citizenship.

Action/Direction:

Over the past year several bills have been introduced. The Ladies of Charity join the Catholic Bishops in support of the [Dream Act](#). (HR 3440) or the [USA Act](#). (HR 4796). We believe that the following which are included in these proposals should be the benchmarks of any legislation:

- **Find a Bipartisan Solution to Protect Dreamers.** The approximately 1.8 million Dreamers living in our country were brought to the United States as young people. They worship with us in our churches and synagogues, serve in our military, contribute to our economy, and add their many talents to American society.

- **Provide a Path to Citizenship.** Dreamers know America as their only home and should not be denied the opportunity to obtain U.S. citizenship and participate fully in civic life.

- **Recognize the Sanctity of Families.** Family immigration is the foundation of our country and of our Church. Pope Francis states, “the family unit, the family is the foundation of co-existence and a remedy against social fragmentation.” We steadfastly know that families are what holds America together. We ask you to reject legislation that threatens family-based immigration.

- **Recognize the Right of Nations to Control Their Borders.** While Catholic social teaching on migration recognizes and respects the sovereignty of each nation to regulate its borders, this right must be balanced with the right of vulnerable migrants, such as asylum seekers and victims of human trafficking, to access protection. Border security should be proportional and justly implemented. Children should be kept with their parents and should not be held in any detention center for more than 20 days.

- **Maintain Protections for Unaccompanied Children.** A solution for Dreamers cannot be at the expense of other immigrant children. Such a tradeoff would be heartless and untenable. We ask that Congress to maintain existing protections for unaccompanied children which help prevent trafficking and abuse and ensure their access to adequate care.

For more information go to Justiceforimmigrants.org.



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ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

ISSUE PAPER: CARE OF OUR COMMON HOME

Faced as we are with global environmental deterioration, Pope Francis addresses every person living on the planet about our common home in the 2015 document *Ladato Si*. He turns to Saint Francis as the example of care for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. St. Francis was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself showing us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace.

Pope Francis' Appeal –*Bring the whole human family together to seek sustainable and integral development..... The creator does not abandon us; nor forsake us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home.*

Background:

Believing as stated by Pope Francis, that “On climate change, there is a clear, definitive and ineluctable ethical imperative to act.” The Ladies of Charity adopted a resolution at the National Assembly on September 19, 2015 standing with the Holy Father in his call to protect our common home and address climate change through our personal actions and through political action. On September 24 a letter signed by the President of LCUSA was sent to every member of Congress in anticipation of the Pope's visit and address to Congress that fall and the Paris Climate Summit the following December, urging our government along with civil society and all people to address “one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day.” We continue to work with faith based groups and the Vincentian Family to promote care of our common home.

Action:

Continue our efforts to encourage education and action both individually and collectively to address the causes and effects of pollution, climate change, potable water, and biodiversity in our communities and especially on the lives of poor people.

Suggested actions for Associations:

- Read and reflect on *Ladato Si*
- Read and reflect on AIC 2017-2018 Training booklets on “Care of our Common Home”
- Examine programs for sustainability and environmental consideration. Eg. making surplus farm produce available in food pantries.
- Join the Global Catholic Climate Movement <https://catholicclimatemovement.global>
- Pray for and with Creation
- Live more simply
- Reuse, repurpose, recycle
- Advocate to protect the environment.

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2018



VINCENTIAN FAMILY GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON HOMELESSNESS

To mark the 400th Anniversary of the Charism, the Vincentian Family decided to launch this major global project aimed at reducing and, where possible, ending homelessness in the countries in which it works. It will involve both immediate holistic care for those suffering homelessness and a campaign for systemic change in the way that homelessness is tackled at a local, regional and global level.

In addition to the program development and advocacy at the UN, the Family Alliance will develop and to make available formation materials in support of this initiative with respect to Vincentian Spirituality. It is envisaged that this 3-year pilot would extend into a commitment up until 2030 in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In the spirit of collaboration of St. Vincent de Paul, inspiration of the Vincentian charism, we seek to merge efforts in order to cooperate for the specific purpose of reducing and ending homelessness worldwide. Building on existing works and projects, we will strengthen the Vincentian network around homelessness by listening to the people experiencing homelessness, sharing best practices, supporting leaders, encouraging the growth of new services, and lobbying for structural change. In the logo, the shape of rooftops above the wording suggests our commitment: that each person can find a place to call home in whatever life circumstances she/he is. This Vincentian Family Global Initiative on Homelessness, given the complexity of the issue of homelessness, addresses it from a global and systemic perspective, acknowledging the urgency to work with all people of good will beyond the Vincentian Family. Along with other Vincentian Family members, the AIC has joined in this current initiative to combat street homelessness and are active members of the Working Group to End Homelessness formed by the Vincentian Family at the UN.

2018 Theme for the Vincentian Family: Fostering a culture of encounter on our streets

Looking after our homeless brothers and sisters living on the streets has been at the forefront of Vincentian charity since the inception of our Charism. St Vincent himself housed foundlings – children without parents who would have been homeless without his support. There are an estimated 100 million people living on our streets in dire poverty. In response to this, the Vincentian Family is focusing its Annual Theme this year on street homelessness inviting Vincentians across the world to foster a culture of encounter, a culture of love and embrace, to our neighbors living on the streets.

Questions for personal reflection and group sharing:

- What do you know about the reality of street homelessness in your city/country?
- What are the most urgent needs? What groups/institutions are already working in your area?
- Could you share a story of your encounter with a homeless person?

How can we take this culture of encounter to our streets?

1. Pray for the homeless
2. Share a meal with your homeless neighbors
3. Share a story at <http://vfhomelessalliance.org/voices/>
3. Become a member of the Famvin Homeless Alliance – sign up on website: vfhomelessalliance.org
4. Join the '13 Houses Campaign' – see more on website: vfhomelessalliance.org

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Ladies of Charity Of The United States Of America®

Advocacy Committee VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GUNS

Background: In April of 2011 the Board of LCUSA by resolution agreed to work with other Catholic Organizations against Human Trafficking. Today we continue that work as a member of the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking. Over the past seven years we have looked at other ways to end violence against women. This year considering the national concern to limit access to firearms, we researched the issue of Domestic Violence and Guns. We present our research for your consideration and comment.

Firearms are the weapon of choice for domestic violence homicides.¹ Firearms are used to control, terrorize and intimidate victims and survivors of domestic violence. For women, domestic violence is one of the greatest risks associated with guns. Between 2003 and 2012, 34% of all women murdered were killed by an intimate partner. More people use guns to commit those crimes than any other weapon, according to FBI data. In some states where Centers for Disease Control data is available, that figure is as high as 50% of all female homicides attributed to domestic violence. Keeping guns out of the hands of domestic abusers is one of the most obvious ways to curb gun deaths. The federal government bars individuals with a misdemeanor violence conviction from owning a gun. But that law and surrounding state and federal policies have gaping loopholes that leave too many women vulnerable.

Among domestic abusers, for example, only 10 states bar those who abuse someone they were dating if they did not live together or have children together, according to the Center for American Progress. One in six women has been stalked at some point in their lives. But among stalkers, only nine states bar those with a misdemeanor offense from owning a gun. Restraining orders and misdemeanor abuse convictions bar gun ownership in federal background checks, 35 states don't enforce their own laws against these major categories of abusers,

Even among those categories of crimes that are banned, the FBI far too often doesn't get the data they need to make the background check system effective. Only three states appear to be submitting complete records to the FBI. Those states—Connecticut, New Hampshire, and New Mexico—account for 79 percent of all state domestic violence records submitted, while some states are submitting no records at all. Most states also do little to remove guns from abusers after they are convicted. Forty-one states have no clear law on the books requiring all domestic abusers to relinquish the guns they already own.

¹ National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Ncadv.org)
https://www.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/guns_and_dv0.pdf

Action: The movement to take guns out of the hands of abusers is mobilizing to reform domestic violence gun laws. Gun safety advocates including former congresswoman Gabby Giffords² are seeking strengthening federal legislation and improving state reporting of crimes to the FBI database. The groups also cite as a major cause for domestic violence the still-festering loophole in federal background checks that omits private sales, even though that loophole has been at the center of the gun lobby's fierce opposition campaign since the Sandy Hook Massacre.

Do you know your state's laws? Policies that can save lives are listed below³.

- In addition to persons prohibited by federal law, persons convicted of a violent misdemeanor against a former or current dating partner, cohabitant, or family member are prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms and ammunition (California, Connecticut, Illinois, New York).
- When a person is convicted of a domestic violence misdemeanor, the court must order the person to surrender all firearms and ammunition in his or her possession (Colorado, Iowa, Tennessee).
- A court that is convicting a defendant of a violence misdemeanor must determine whether the crime falls within the federal definition of "misdemeanor crime of domestic violence," and, if so, must report the defendant to the databases used for firearm purchaser background checks (Illinois, New York).
- In addition to persons prohibited by federal law, former or current dating partners, cohabitants, or family members who are subject to a domestic violence protective order are prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms and ammunition (California, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Utah).
- Persons subject to a domestic violence protective order issued before notice or a hearing are prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms and ammunition (California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin).
- All domestic violence protective orders require law enforcement to seize all firearms and ammunition in the abuser's possession, or under his or her ownership or control (Illinois, Massachusetts).
- Law enforcement responding to a domestic violence incident are required to remove all firearms and ammunition in the abuser's possession, or under his or her ownership or control (New Hampshire).
- Firearms seized at the scene of a domestic violence incident must be permanently given to law enforcement, sold at public auction, or destroyed (Ohio).

² <http://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/who-can-have-a-gun/domestic-violence-firearms/>

³ Domestic Violence & Firearms | Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence 6/25/18, 9*54

PM<http://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/who-can-have-a-gun/domestic-violence-firearms/> Page 20 of 22

See Also "When I Call for Help" <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/domestic-violence/when-i-call-for-help.cfm>



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Advocacy Committee

ISSUE PAPER: HEALTH CARE

According to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, from 1960 to 2016, health spending rose from \$147 per person to \$10,348 per person.

Background:

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010 or Obamacare reformed the health care system to a point where many who had been previously uninsured or who had pre-existing conditions could obtain health insurance. Congress has repeatedly attempted to repeal the ACA without having a replacement plan but has put forth worrying changes which would affect the millions of older adults, people with disabilities, low income families, and those with pre-existing conditions, who now have health insurance through Medicare or Medicaid. In addition, the administration removed the individual health insurance mandate under the ACA (effective in 2019), which penalized people who can afford insurance but refused to buy it. Without this individual mandate, healthy people will drop health coverage or opt for the low-cost plans. Reducing the pool of healthy insured undermines the viability of the insurance programs leading to premium increases.

MEDICARE

Medicare accounts for 15% of the Federal budget and when Congress trims the deficit, Medicare goes on the “chopping block.” Then beneficiaries will be asked to pick up a larger share of health costs which could mean higher premiums, co-pays and cost sharing. It could mean tightening up on what Medicare covers and renewed calls to raise the Medicare eligibility age. Today, Medicare provides benefits to 60 million older adults and people with disabilities. However, the number of those 65 and over will double and the number 80 and over will nearly triple between now and 2050 (Kaiser Family Foundation report).

Options Being Discussed:

- Voucher System - Each beneficiary would get a flat amount of money each year to buy health coverage. If the care costs more than the voucher, the beneficiary would pay the difference.
- Raising the age of eligibility for Medicare to 67 or higher. People in their 60’s who do not have employer coverage would have to self-fund their health care for two or more years.
- --Short-term Limited Benefit Insurance Policies - Expanding availability for people who don’t have coverage through an employer or government program. These plans do not cover pregnancy and individuals with pre-existing conditions and can charge higher premiums for older adults. Many 50 to 64-year-olds would be shut out of the insurance market.

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Action:

*Any Medicare proposals should focus on changes to the program, i.e., reducing prescription drug costs, enhancing payment and delivery reforms, and addressing the widespread fraud, waste, and abuse in the program.

MEDICAID

Medicaid has served as a safety net for millions of people in every state, including over 17 million children with disabilities, adults with disabilities, and low income elderly. The federal government sets general Medicaid guidelines, but each state designs and runs its own program. With the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, Medicaid's health care role grew as coverage was expanded to more low-income families.

Options Being Discussed

- Expanded long-term care services in home or community
- Add new work requirements
- Time limits on Medicaid benefits!
- Block Grant - States would get a fixed amount of money from the federal government. States make up the difference if enrollees need more care than the block grant allows-- or cut benefits or scale back who is eligible.

Action:

*Oppose capping Medicaid funding but focus on efforts to encourage more individuals to receive services in their homes and communities rather than costly institutional care.