

Durbin Celebrates 11th Anniversary Of DACA, Calls On Congress To Finally Pass The Dream Act

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WASHINGTON – In a speech on the Senate floor, U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee and lead author of the *Dream Act*, today celebrated the 11th anniversary of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and called on Congress to finally pass the *Dream Act* to give Dreamers a pathway to citizenship.

Twenty-two years ago, Durbin first introduced the *Dream Act*—bipartisan legislation that would give undocumented immigrants who grew up in this country a chance to become American citizens. In 2010, Durbin sent a letter, joined by the late Senator

Richard Lugar (R-IN), asking then-President Obama to stop the deportation of Dreamers. Eleven years ago today, President Obama responded by announcing the DACA program. More than 800,000 Dreamers have since come forward and received DACA, which has allowed them to contribute more fully to their country as teachers, nurses, doctors, engineers, and small business owners.

“Today, June 15, marks the 11th anniversary of a life changing program for a group of young people who share my mother’s story, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, DACA,” said Durbin. “Back in 2010, on a bipartisan basis, the late Republican Senator Richard Lugar and I asked President Obama to use his power as President to protect from deportation hundreds of thousands of young people, many of whom arrived in our country as infants and toddlers like my mom. Eleven years ago today, President Obama responded. He announced that he would use his executive authority to create the DACA program. These young people have been known generally as Dreamers. They’ve grown up alongside our kids and grandkids. They pledge allegiance... to the same American flag and many have gone on to serve our nation as members of the United States Armed Forces, first responders, and much more.”

Durbin continued, “Dreamers have earned their place in the American story, but right now they’re still waiting on this Congress to finish the job that President Obama started with DACA. This program was always intended to be a temporary solution. The permanent solution is obvious—enact legislation, bipartisan legislation that was introduced more than two decades ago, the *Dream Act*. It would provide a path to citizenship for Dreamers all across America. Without the protections of the *Dream Act*, these young people have been forced to live a life of uncertainty. They have to renew their status every two years, which means they can only plan their lives in two-year installments.”

During his speech, Durbin told the story of Dr. Sumbul Siddiqui. Her story is the 136th Dreamer story Durbin has shared on the Senate floor.

Sumbul’s family moved to Georgia, from Pakistan, when she was four years old. Growing up, she was a star student who spent hours in the library, getting lost in books, learned to play the viola, and fell in love with the arts. In her mind, she was like every other kid, until she started applying to college and discovered she was not an American citizen.

So even though Sumbul graduated from high school with the highest honors, she feared that her immigration status would prevent her from pursuing a college education. Fortunately, it did not. Instead, Sumbul was awarded a private merit scholarship to attend Agnes Scott College in Atlanta. And during her first year, she was accepted into the DACA program. She worked four jobs to cover the cost of tuition—and still,

graduated a semester early with honors. She even found time to volunteer at a free health clinic. And it was in this role—working alongside physicians serving her community—that Sumbul found her professional calling: medicine.

After college, Sumbul decided to apply to a medical school that has supported Dreamers since the very beginning of DACA: the Loyola University Stritch School of Medicine in Chicago. Since 2012, the Stritch School of Medicine made a brave commitment—they became the first medical school in America to adjust its admissions policy to welcome Dreamers. And in the years since, nearly 40 Dreamers have graduated from this program. Last month, Dr. Sumbul Siddiqui become one of those graduates. Durbin had the honor of [speaking](#) at her commencement ceremony.

“With her medical degree, Dr. Siddiqui plans to dedicate her career to serving families in the Chicagoland area. Soon, she will begin her residency at the University of Chicago, where she will focus on supporting underserved communities,” Durbin said. “Ask yourself a basic question: would America be better off if Dr. Siddiqui and the Dreamers like her were unable to work here in the United States? When our communities are in desperate need of doctors and nurses? Of course not.”

Durbin concluded by calling on his colleagues to finally pass the [Dream Act](#) to give Dreamers a pathway to citizenship. Dreamers are protected from deportation for now, but due to lawsuits by extreme MAGA Republicans, their fates are in the hands of a Republican-appointed judge who has repeatedly found DACA and other programs like it unlawful.

“Earlier this year, I reintroduced the *Dream Act* with my friend, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham. We have been on the cusp of passing the *Dream Act* for years. But time and again, Congress has failed to finish the job. Right now, this legislation is more important than ever,” Durbin said. “That is because one judge in Texas—who has repeatedly ruled against DACA—could soon end protections for nearly 600,000 Dreamers like Dr. Siddiqui. That would be a disaster—not just for Dreamers, but for our entire country. Isn’t it time for Congress to step up and meet our responsibility to Dreamers once and for all, as well as our responsibility for America’s future, on a bipartisan basis? I think that time is long overdue and I hope that we meet our obligation as lawmakers to solve this problem, not just for this wonderful young woman and the ambition she’s shown to make a better life for herself, but for the future of our own country.”

Video of Durbin’s remarks on the Senate floor is available [here](#).

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