



**United We Dream®**

# **FIGHTING for CLEAN DREAM**

## **Talking Points on Criminalization, Enforcement, and Border Militarization**

### **About This Guide:**

**Who is this guide for?** Organizers, advocates, community members and allies who are pushing for a clean DREAM Act and are seeking **guidance on how to address common questions from media or elected officials about our demand that any DREAM Act be clean of provisions that further harm immigrant communities.**

**Who created this guide?** This resource is being disseminated by the United We Dream Network and was created by a **collective of communicators at organizations who have decades of experience working to uphold the human rights of ALL immigrants** while fighting against mass criminalization, detention, and deportation. Representative organizations of this collective include: the Immigrant Defense Project, the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, the National Day Laborer Organizing Network, Enlace, Grassroots Leadership, the National Immigrant Justice Center, the National Immigration Law Center, the United We Dream Network, the Southeast Asian Resource and Action Center, and the Detention Watch Network. The Southern Border Communities Coalition provided additional support on talking points related to border militarization.

**How should I use this guide?** This resource is meant to serve as a complement to, and not a replacement of, your current talking points around a clean DREAM Act. It seeks to address common yet difficult questions that aim to either call into question or discredit **our firm demand that any DREAM Act be clean of provisions that further harm immigrant communities.** We also have included an appendix with additional talking points on key issues with different tones and angles, depending on your audience.

- However, we acknowledge this resource is NOT all-inclusive! If you have a question you've been really struggling to answer related to the DREAM Act and enforcement, feel free to reach out to [media@immdefense.org](mailto:media@immdefense.org) and we'll do our best to brainstorm messaging with you.

**TLDR:** Are you pro-immigrant and anti-racism? Do you believe in a future with fewer deportations? This guide is for you! Join us in calling for a clean DREAM Act now!

## Background:

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program enabled nearly a million undocumented young people to go to school, work, and support themselves and their families with the cloud of deportation temporarily lifted from over them.

In September of this year, the Trump administration made a racially-motivated, senseless choice to end the successful 5 year run of DACA.

Now, unless Congress acts quickly to pass the *DREAM Act*, bipartisan legislation that would provide a path to legalization, by the end of this year, those young people and their families will once again have to live with the threat (and promise) of deportation overshadowing their every move.

Republicans and Democrats, both long-time supporters of the *DREAM Act* during its 17-year history, have begun negotiations on the provisions of the bill. **Some of these proposed “bargains”** – from increasing the volume of immigration enforcement operations and the number of immigration agents to ramping up the detention and deportation of other members of the immigrant community – **are unacceptable.**

Across the country, we’re standing united to call for nothing less than a **clean *DREAM Act***, one that is **free of any mechanisms that seek to increase deportations** and that humanely leans upon our nation’s longtime commitment to inclusivity and opportunity.

## Frequently Asked Questions & Suggested Answers:

**Q.** Even if it subjects others to deportation, isn’t having even one family member with legal status better off than having nothing at all? OR

**Q.** People have been trying to pass the *DREAM Act* for 17 years now – can you really afford to be so picky with your demands? Aren’t you being selfish?

**A.** EVERYONE in a family loses when a loved one is deported, which is why we continue to call upon members of Congress to take action on commonsense policy like a clean *DREAM Act*, a *policy that keeps families together, rather than tears them apart.*

- Supporting Fact: Studies show that the deportation of a parent takes a lifelong toll on the children they leave behind, with some of those children forced into the foster care system as a result.

**A.** A clean *DREAM Act* means that we will not trade **our dreams** for **the nightmare of more deportations**, a nightmare that has already become reality for over 200,000 immigrants under the Trump administration.

- We are fighting for a future that *includes* our parents by our sides, not one that leaves them behind.
- We refuse to be used as bargaining chips in a deal that would target our parents and our communities by rounding them up en masse and deporting them.
- We will NOT be complicit in a deal that further paints our parents and community members as undeserving of staying here, in the country they also call home.

**A.** Politicians are asking undocumented young people to *make a deal with the devil*: secure our futures in exchange for sacrificing our parents and our other community members by supporting increased resources for detention and deportation.

Such a deal is bad business AND bad policy, one that would rob this country of the tremendous heritage, innovations and contributions that immigrants continue to bring to this day.

- This administration will not coerce undocumented young people into being an accomplice in its cruel and senseless goal of deporting as many immigrants as possible.

**Q.** Don't we need to secure our border? What's wrong with using the DfYUa Act as a vehicle to do that?

**A.** **The time is now for Congress to pass a clean and bipartisan Dream Act without further militarizing border communities.** Congress has already invested billions in highly militarizing our nation's safest communities, with hundreds of miles of walls and thousands of unaccountable border agents who abuse their authority to stop, frisk and interrogate ANY border resident on daily commutes to school or work. To further militarize the border region in exchange for a Dream Act would devastate the very families of the young immigrants we are trying to protect. We need policies that revitalize border communities, not militarize them.

**Q.** Why wouldn't you want to devote more resources to detain and deport immigrants who have committed crimes? Don't you care about public safety?

**A.** The existing deportation system is already a nightmare of human rights abuses. We should be reforming and ultimately ending it altogether, not wasting money on its expansion.

- Supporting Fact: The United States is ALREADY deporting record numbers of immigrants.
- Supporting Fact: The Department of Homeland Security ALREADY receives more money than all other federal law enforcement agencies combined.
- Supporting Fact: There is already a BED QUOTA, lobbied for by the private prison industry, that requires ICE to lock up more than 34,000 immigrants a day.

**A.** Deportations work against our desire for safe, healthy and whole communities. Millions of people face being torn from their families at any moment and being locked up for years without a lawyer or due process, only to be sent to a country they may barely know or where they could even risk death.

**A.** Using the criminal justice system as a pipeline to deportation will only ENHANCE racial profiling and the over policing of black and brown communities. At a time when most people, including Democrats and Republicans, agree on the need for criminal justice reform, the last thing we should be doing is FURTHER ENTANGLING these two systems.

**Q. Isn't the DfYUa Act just going to encourage more unaccompanied minors – many of whom are dangerous gang members – to come to the U.S. in even higher numbers?**

**A.** False rumors that question the motives and suffering of Central American children who are seeking safety in the U.S. are being spread in the spirit of hate by members of Congress who seek to undermine our nation's long history as a symbol of hope for the persecuted.

**A.** The United States, in step with other countries around the world, has a legal and moral responsibility to protect refugees, including children, that are fleeing persecution.

- Supporting Fact: Gender, family, and gang violence in Central America leave children with no choice but to flee or face gang recruitment, sexual and gender-based atrocities, or murder.
- Supporting Fact: Women and girls in particular face a startling degree of violence, including murder, extortion, and rape.

**A.** As we continue to advocate for stronger protections for unaccompanied minors in the U.S., we hope that the members of Congress who have long championed the DfYUa Act will also stand up for the preservation of separate and existing programs to protect children and their families who are fleeing the unimaginable and seeking asylum.

**A.** Demonizing child refugees is not an effective response to gang violence in our communities. Children who fled gang violence as refugees, only to confront gang violence here in the U.S. need to be supported, not demonized. In many cases, it was their vulnerability as orphans or abuse survivors that subjected these children to pressure or force by gangs, forcing them to flee towards safety. The presence of gangs is a complex public safety issue and the proven way to effectively combat gang activity is to increase resources for prevention measures.

**Q. So then what ARE you willing to trade off for the DfYUa Act?**

**A.** Immigrant communities have been paying for the devastating consequences of deportation for far too long, and we will no longer stand for the sacrificing of our loved ones.

**A.** People have been “compromising” for years on immigration. It is these very compromises that have stalled the DfYUa Act for 17 years and we are clearly in need of a different approach.

**A.** The only people who win from compromises that support more deportations are the ones who have been unfairly given the most legal protections and have the least to lose – private prison companies. We will not sign away the rights of our parents and communities in order to line the pocketbooks of companies that profit off of human suffering.

# APPENDIX: CRIMINALIZATION

*Responding to demands that more immigrants should be detained and deported, particularly those deemed “criminal,” in exchange for c@Ö!^æ Å&c*

## SUMMARY

**CLEAN DREAM means that a meaningful DfYUa act cannot be built on a NIGHTMARE.**

- Politicians are asking Ö!^æ ers to make a deal with the devil: secure our futures in exchange for sacrificing our parents and our communities.
- We refuse to be complicit in any deal that further criminalizes our parents and our communities.

## TALKING POINTS

**Republicans cannot coerce immigrant youth into implementing their mass deportation agenda.**

- We refuse to be used as bargaining chips in a deal that sacrifices our parents and our communities to the Republican’s mass deportation agenda.
- **People have been “making trades” for years on immigration.** You know who the winners have been? Private prison companies. Defense contractors. People who want fewer black and brown people in this country.

**The existing deportation system is ALREADY a nightmare. We should be ending it, not making it worse.**

- The United States is ALREADY deporting record numbers of immigrants.
- The Department of Homeland Security ALREADY receives more money than all other federal law enforcement agencies combined.
- Millions of people face being torn from their families at any moment and being locked up for years without a lawyer or due process, only to be sent to a country they may barely know or where they could even risk death.
- Studies have shown that deportation of a parent takes an enormous toll on children, inflicting serious trauma and educational deficits, and forcing some into foster care.

**The existing deportation system relies on an unholy alliance with the problematic criminal justice system.**

- Local law enforcement and immigration collude on every level.
- Police actively collude with immigration agents, and in some states, are deputized to act as immigration agents.
- Many local jails hand immigrants directly over to ICE, turning any arrest into an express ticket to detention and deportation.
- Even in so-called sanctuary jurisdictions, ICE actively uses police databases and local courts to target immigrants.

**Expanding the criminal justice to deportation pipeline will only ENHANCE RACIAL PROFILING and the OVER POLICING OF BLACK AND BROWN COMMUNITIES.**

- For many black and brown immigrants, a racially motivated traffic stop or stop and frisk can have tragic consequences, leading not only to arrest but deportation, and even death.

- Black and brown communities, including immigrants, are disproportionately affected by racist police practices and laws.
- At a time when most people, including Democrats and Republicans, agree on the need for criminal justice reform, the last thing we should be doing is FURTHER ENTANGLING these two systems.

**Funding for more detention facilities will expand an INHUMANE system that FUELS PROFITS for the private prison industry.**

- Immigration detention facilities are notorious for their abusive and inhumane conditions and, under Trump, deaths in detention have increased at an alarming rate.
- ICE plans to expand detention facilities by permitting prison operators to cut corners on basic safety standards.
- There is already a BED QUOTA, lobbied for by the private prison industry, that requires ICE to lock up more than 34,000 immigrants a day.
- Expanding detention will fuel profits for private prisons corporations whose stocks have already shot through the roof under Trump.
- GEO Group, one of the largest prison companies in the country and one that stands to profit significantly from further expansion of the detention system, just held its annual conference at a Trump resort: anyone who still believes this administration wants to build more prisons to improve public safety isn't paying attention. The president and the prison industry want to lock up more people because it means more profits for them.

**Trump's ploy to paint all immigrants as dangerous criminals is part of a blatantly racist alt-right agenda to enact mass deportation.**

- Trump and the Republicans are going back to to a **tried and true technique - painting us as a group as inherently criminal and therefore undeserving of rights.**
- Buying into the idea that one group presents a danger to the rest of society because of where they were born or the color of their skin is immoral. These ideas have been used as a tactic by white supremacists and fascists throughout history and have no place in our democracy.
- These claims play on racist stereotypes and are baseless. In fact, studies show that so-called Sanctuary cities are more safe. Keeping police accountable for what they do in a community is what true safety looks like. And many sheriffs have pointed out that Trump's agenda undermines everyone's safety.

**Any act of terror or violence, no matter the race or religious affiliation of the suspect, should absolutely be condemned.**

- We mourn the tragic loss of life in New York City last week.
- But, as a democracy, we cannot let the actions of one individual justify stripping millions of people of their fundamental civil rights.
- Terrorism is a consequence of failed foreign policy, not a symptom of a dysfunctional immigration system.

# APPENDIX: UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

*Responding to anti-immigrant rhetoric about increasing the number Central American children seeking refuge in the United States.*

## SUMMARY

**Users will not be used as pawns in exchange for laws that hurt our parents and communities, and we will not be used as pawns to hurt children who are coming to this country because their lives are in danger.**

- Elected officials for years have tried to convince Americans that young immigrants and refugees from Central America endanger our communities.
- This is despicable and is rooted in the same racism that says that our parents must be punished for bringing us here, or that convinced the president to try three times to implement a Muslim ban.

## TALKING POINTS

**The United States has a legal and moral responsibility to protect refugee children fleeing persecution.**

- These attacks on Central American children are more of the same “America First” rhetoric we have come to expect of this administration and the extreme anti-immigrant members of Congress who seek to undermine our nation as a symbol of hope for the persecuted.
- We hope that the members of Congress who have long championed the Dreamers will also continue to stand up for children and their families who are coming to this country seeking asylum.
- Personal testimony (*when appropriate/possible*): Individuals who still have a personal connection to Central America should think of ways they can talk about how violence there has affected their loved ones still in the region, and emphasize their shared humanity and solidarity with all migrants in the United States regardless of what brought them here.

**Targeting immigrant youth based on unsupported allegations of gang involvement does not actually promote public safety.**

- Law enforcement often use overbroad and unsupported information based on stereotypes about immigrant youth to make often erroneous determinations about gang involvement.
- Targeting communities of color, already confronting over-policing and discriminatory policing practices, gives the appearance of being tough on gangs without actually addressing public safety, which must be addressed through evidence-based solutions.
- Passing a clean DREAM Act would be a major step forward in helping our communities be more secure.
- Tearing apart our communities and families with deportation will do far more harm than good for public safety.
- Violating international law by turning away Central American refugees endangers lives and feeds the cycle of violence.

**Central American children are fleeing a humanitarian crisis, not coming here for DACA: Central American children and families are running for their lives.**

- Gender, family, and gang violence in the Northern Triangle countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras) leave children with no choice but to flee or face gang recruitment, sexual and gender-based atrocities, or murder.
- El Salvador and Honduras were the deadliest countries in the world (outside war zones) in 2016.
- Women and girls in particular face a startling degree of violence, including murder, extortion, and rape.
- The United Nations refugee agency has found that the majority of children coming to the southern border merit protection under international law.
- The Obama administration took extreme measures to stop Central American children from coming – opening up massive detention centers where children as young as babies and their mothers were held for months. Yet families still came to this country seeking protection because their lives depended on it. DACA had nothing to do with it.
- Children are not only fleeing to the United States. From 2008 to 2014, the countries of Mexico, Panama, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Belize saw a 1,185% increase in the number of asylum applications from citizens of the Northern Triangle.

**Even children who may have been involved with gangs in their home countries have a right to seek protection in the United States.**

- U.S. law and treaty obligations mandate that any person who seeks protection from persecution or torture in the U.S. must be given an opportunity to do so. Nearly 40 years ago, Congress passed the U.S. Refugee Act establishing procedures for individuals fleeing violence to seek asylum. Allowing a racist administration to weaken these protections in exchange for the DREAM Act will have severe and long-term ramifications for our country and refugees everywhere.
- In many cases it was these children's very vulnerability as street children, orphans, or abuse survivors that rendered them subject to pressure or force by gangs, and many flee to the U.S. to seek the safety they could not find at home.
- Ultimately, an asylum officer or immigration judge will decide whether they are entitled to protection under U.S. law.

**Demonizing child refugees is not an effective response to gang violence in our communities. Children who fled gang violence only to confront gang violence here in the U.S. need to be supported, not demonized.**

- The presence of gangs in communities is a complex public safety issue requiring evidence-based solutions including gang prevention, not demagoguery of children.
- We must invest in prevention programs for our young immigrants and families to help them integrate into our communities rather than banish them to the margins where they are vulnerable to the human traffickers and gang members who purposefully target vulnerable youth lacking support systems.
- We must also focus on building the skillsets and capacities of social programs to adequately address the complex trauma issues facing Central American young people and their caregivers.



# APPENDIX: BORDER MILITARIZATION

*Responding to calls for increased border militarization in exchange for passing the Dream Act.*



## “The Real Dream” Talking Points

### Background

Congress must pass a clean and bipartisan Dream Act by December to protect the nearly one million young people who are in danger of being deported following President Trump’s cruel decision to terminate DACA. An estimated 1 in 5 Dreamers live in the southern border region and half of all Dreamers reside in the four southern border states -- California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. Proposals by some in Congress to further escalate punitive, unnecessary and costly border enforcement in exchange for the Dream Act would expose Dreamers’ parents and family members, the original Dreamers, to the administration’s massive deportation machine in the region.

### TOPLINES

1. **The Real Dream is about protecting everybody.** The Real Dream is about protecting Dreamers *and* the original Dreamers -- their parents and loved ones. But deals that protect young immigrants at the expense of their families, such as further militarizing the border in exchange for a Dream Act, run counter to the Real Dream and must be stopped. A bill with border enforcement add-ons would only serve to further President Trump’s inhumane, anti-immigrant agenda and endanger the lives of 15 million border residents and immigrant families, including Border Dreamers. Funding more deportation agents to racially profile and separate families or detention camps to lock up women and children offends our values. We need policies that revitalize border communities, not militarize them.
2. **The time is now for Congress must pass a clean and bipartisan Dream Act without further militarizing border communities.** Congress has already invested billions in highly militarizing our nation’s safest communities, with hundreds of miles of walls and thousands of unaccountable border agents who abuse their authority to stop, frisk and interrogate ANY border resident on daily commutes to school or work. To further militarize the border region in exchange for a Dream Act would devastate the very families of the young immigrants we are trying to protect. We need policies that revitalize border communities, not militarize them.
3. **We should not use our youth as political bargaining chips.** It is unconscionable that Congress would use Border Dreamers as bargaining chips to further militarize the southern border region. This is a sinister form of blackmail that essentially trades the safety of young Border Dreamers for the safety of their parents and community members.

4. **Congress needs to increase oversight and accountability for our nation's largest police force--U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).** CBP needs to be held accountable to ensure that the rights and dignity of border residents and people on the move are protected and their quality of life is preserved. Previous hiring surges of poorly trained, heavily armed border agents had devastating impacts of traumatic family separations, widespread racial profiling, and killing unarmed teenagers. Border communities should be able to trust that federal law enforcement will be held accountable to police best practices that protect human life.

### **Talking Points for Dreamers around their Parents**

1. **My parents are the original Dreamers.** Our parents risked their lives by migrating to the United States to ensure that my siblings and I had better lives. It is because of them that I have the opportunity to be successful and contribute to this country. Our success does not happen in a vacuum. We depend on our support systems. We cannot trade their safety for ours. Congress must pass a clean and bipartisan Dream Act without further militarizing border communities.
2. **I am not a bargaining chip.** I am a young person with a dream and the desire to contribute to this country, the country that helped raise me. My safety should not be tied to political games that include wasteful spending on more border enforcement. The clock is ticking and my life is at stake. Congress must act now. Congress must pass a clean and bipartisan Dream Act without further militarizing border communities.
3. **My community is already militarized, we don't need more to fear.** Where I live, there are thousands of deportation agents. Some wear ICE badges, but most wear Border Patrol badges. These agents act like they're above the law and set up checkpoints anywhere in the 100-mile zone. Border agents can stop us anywhere -- at the grocery store, on the bus, in the streets, or on our way to school. And when they harass, beat, rape, and even kill someone in the community, the federal government does not hold them accountable. We do not need any more agents in our community. We need accountability for the agents we already have.

### **Case Examples of border militarization:**

Border Patrol has a long history of abusing people on the move and border residents who live in communities far removed from the border. President Trump's campaign to unleash a deportation force of Border Patrol and ICE agents has already left devastating scars in border communities. Under Trump, Border agents have: retaliated against an outspoken Dreamer in Los Angeles; swiftly and unjustly deported DACA recipient Juan Manuel Montes in Calexico, CA; detained Jesus Vasquez after Texas state police pulled him over for tinted windows in El Paso, TX; subjected DACA recipients to hours of intimidation at a south Texas checkpoint located far into the interior; and were recently reported singling out day laborers in communities near New Orleans.