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## Trump Administration Urges DACA Recipients to Voluntarily Depart U.S. Amid Renewed Immigration Crackdown

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The Trump administration has issued a direct warning to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, stating they are not automatically shielded from deportation and encouraging them to consider voluntary departure. The advisory aligns with President Donald Trump's broader immigration enforcement strategy, which he has pledged will be the most extensive in U.S. history.

Tricia McLaughlin, assistant secretary at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), emphasized in a statement to *Newsweek* that DACA does not provide legal immigration status. “Illegal aliens who claim to be recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals are not automatically protected from deportations,” McLaughlin said. “Any illegal alien who is a DACA recipient may be subject to arrest and deportation for a number of reasons, including if they’ve committed a crime.”

The DACA program, implemented by President Barack Obama in 2012, was intended to shield certain undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as minors from deportation. It also granted temporary work authorization. However, its legal foundation has been challenged repeatedly, leaving recipients, commonly referred to as “Dreamers”, in a state of uncertainty.

McLaughlin first made headlines earlier this week when she told *NPR* that DACA recipients should consider self-deporting using the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) “CBP One” mobile application. In a follow-up statement to *Newsweek*, she added, “The United States is offering illegal aliens \$1,000 and a free flight to self-deport now. We encourage every person here illegally to take advantage of this offer and reserve the chance to come back to the U.S. the right legal way to live the American dream.”

Although the Trump administration has not officially terminated DACA, the recent remarks suggest a firmer stance compared to President Joe Biden’s approach, which emphasized protections for Dreamers and attempted to strengthen the program.

Cases of DACA recipients facing deportation have recently drawn attention. One such case involves Erick Hernandez Rodriguez, a 34-year-old DACA recipient who was arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). DHS claims he attempted to re-enter the country illegally after allegedly self-deporting. However, his attorney, Valerie Sigamani, contests that narrative, stating Rodriguez was working a ride-share job in San Ysidro, California, and accidentally crossed into Mexico.

Rodriguez has lived in the U.S. for two decades. His wife, Nancy Rivera, is an American citizen, and the couple has one child, with another on the way. He had been working toward obtaining permanent legal residency before the incident. Under current DACA policy, recipients who leave the country without advance parole documentation risk losing protection and facing deportation.

According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), over 500,000 individuals are currently enrolled in DACA. Legal analysts note that while the program remains technically in place, its future is increasingly uncertain due to active lawsuits and shifting policy priorities.

President Trump, in a December interview with NBC's *Meet the Press*, acknowledged the complex reality facing Dreamers. "The Democrats have made it very, very difficult to do anything," he said. "Republicans are very open to the Dreamers... Many years ago, they were brought into this country. Some have become successful. And we're going to have to do something with them."

Advocacy groups have expressed alarm. Anabel Mendoza, communications director for United We Dream, told *NPR*, "We've known that DACA remains a program that has been temporary. We've sounded the alarms over that. What we are seeing now is that DACA is being chipped away at."

For now, DACA recipients remain in legal limbo. Federal courts are expected to rule on several ongoing challenges to the program, while the Trump administration continues to push for stricter immigration enforcement, signaling a return to a more hardline posture on border control and deportations.