

Farm Worker Ministry Northwest Board Member Katherine Bell Reports on DACA

Farmworker Ministry Board Member Katherine Bell and the Rev. Jill Delaney (United Church of Christ pastor in Yakima, WA) were asked to participate in an action in Washington D.C. to speak with Washington State Senators and Members of Congress on behalf of the “Dreamers,” the more than 800,000 immigrant youth who came to the US as children.

President Trump terminated the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival Program (DACA) (effective March 2018) which protected these “Dreamers,” and now these youth are at risk of deportation if Congress doesn’t pass legislation soon.

Katherine tells us that Pastor Jill and herself were all set to go to the December 6, 2017 national rally in Washington DC but

“After a day of traveling to the Portland airport (from Yakima) and waiting through canceled flights, we decided that the next available flights would not support us to be active (and awake) for our meetings.

So, after much conversation with Disciples of Christ and Church World Service, we decided that we could still have conversations with our Senators and Members of Congress, but through a phone conversation and letters. That evening, Jill and myself wrote letters to Senator Patty Murray, Senator Maria Cantwell, and Congressman Dan Newhouse. These letters told the stories of friends and families who have been either been DACA recipients or have experienced navigating the legal system without supports such as DACA.

The next day, Jill and myself were able to talk with staffers from both Senator Murray's office (Jake Cornett, Senior Advisor) and Senator Cantwell's office (Michael Davisson, Immigration Staffer). The staffers appreciated the letters because they told the stories of those people that we hold dear in our lives, something that the Senator's could use as leverage in current and future conversations with moving towards a clean Dream Act.

We were able to have a conversation directly with Congressman Dan Newhouse, who welcomed the stories we shared. We were excited to learn that Newhouse has played a key role in leading efforts for a clean Dream Act, including drafting a letter with fellow Republicans to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Paul Ryan, in “support of passing a permanent legislative solution for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients before the end of the year.” Since Newhouse grew up, lived, and worked in Sunnyside, the heart of agricultural production in Washington State, he knows the impact of DACA on his community.

Overall, Pastor Jill and myself felt like not only our stories were heard, but also those stories of the countless others who have shared similar experiences.”

[Click here to see the letter Katherine sent to her legislators.](#)

Though Katherine and Pastor Jill were not able to get to Washington DC for the rally, many others did.

Recently, the preliminary injunction temporarily blocking the halting of DACA was issued Jan. 9, 2018 by U.S. District Judge William Alsup in response to lawsuits by the state of California, the University of California and

attorneys general from Maine, Maryland and Minnesota.

According to an article in the LA Times, “This is a huge step forward, but the fight is not over,” said California Atty. Gen. Xavier Becerra, who filed the suit.

“The real question now turns to the Congress and the president. Will they act?” Becerra said. “It is time for Congress to give us a lasting solution that will leave no doubt that the Dreamers are Americans and that they are here to stay.”

Advocates for immigrants say more than 120 DACA recipients a day have already lost protected status, a number that is expected to swell to 1,000 in March if Trump’s decision to end the program is allowed.