

Voces de la Frontera: DACA recipients from New York and Wisconsin to demand Paul Ryan pass the DREAM Act at annual Al Smith Dinner in NYC

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NEW YORK, NEW YORK – On Thursday, DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipients from Wisconsin and New York will hold a demonstration outside the annual Al Smith Dinner targeting its keynote speaker, Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan. Ryan has continued to refuse to meet with immigrant youth from his own district about the Dream Act, which would provide urgently needed protections and a path to citizenship for immigrant youth with DACA.

Immigrant leaders from both New York and Ryan's home state have asked New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan to rescind Ryan's keynote invitation, citing that immigrant youth are "deeply offended" that Ryan would be a speaker in such a high profile event meant to benefit children when the speaker's actions against immigrant youth go against that mission. Despite thousands of people around the country signing an online petition, Dolan has refused to withdraw the invitation.

WHAT: Immigrant youth from NY and Wisconsin to target Senator Speaker Paul Ryan at Al Smith Dinner.

WHEN: Thursday, October 19th, 6pm EST

WHERE: Hilton Midtown, 1335 6th Ave, New York, NY 10019

WHO: Immigrant youth from Voces de la Frontera (Wisconsin) and Make the Road New York, with allies from the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM), Reform Immigration For America (RI4A), ALIGN, Community Voices Heard, Working Families Party, Resist Here, United We Dream, Center for Popular Democracy (List in Formation)

Note: Wisconsin immigrant youth participants are available for interview by phone and video chat throughout Wednesday and Thursday

Speaker Ryan has the power to bring a clean Dream Act, which would provide a path to citizenship for Dreamers, to the House floor, but has instead chosen to use the lives of DACA beneficiaries as bargaining chips to advance the racist agenda of white supremacists in the administration. Immigrant youth from Wisconsin and New York are demanding that Ryan meet with them.

Fernanda Jimenez, a high school student and member of Voces de la Frontera's student arm Youth Empowered in the Struggle, said, "As a DACA recipient from Paul Ryan's district, I'm worried about my future, and that of all the other young people whose lives hang in the balance. We have gone on hunger strike outside Ryan's office, we have held a prayer vigil at his church, and we have invited him to town halls for over two years. Cardinal Dolan has spoken forcefully in defense of DACA and has called for a legislative solution. It's way past time for Paul Ryan to meet with us and the Dream Act and move forward on solving this crisis." Jimenez' and her sister are participating in the delegation along with two other Wisconsin DACA recipients and their siblings.

Cesar Ortega, Make the Road New York member on Staten Island and practicing Catholic, "As Trump tries to tear apart our families and our dreams for the future, Paul Ryan keeps refusing to meet with immigrant youth like me. We demand that Paul Ryan meet with us about passing the DREAM Act, which is the solution we need. If he won't meet with us, we'll be out there on Thursday to protest."

New York City Councilmember Carlos Menchaca, added, "We find ourselves in a political environment poisoned with hate and antipathy toward DACA recipients. Innocent people who have spent their entire lives in this country, learning, working,

and strengthening our country. We cannot stay quiet and we will not stay quiet in the face of these attacks, nor can we honor the politicians that are playing politics, poor and senseless, with people's lives. Until Mr. Ryan decides to be the Speaker for all Americans, puts forward a clean DREAM Act, and finally meets with his immigrant constituents, he has no business proclaiming to be a defender of American youth."