

# Austin pastor joins call to support Dreamers

December 20, 2017

AUSTIN—A conservative Southern Baptist pastor from Austin joined other community leaders from around Texas in urging Congress to pass permanent legislation as soon as possible to benefit Dreamers—young people brought to the United States as children.

Tim Moore, pastor of Walk Worthy Baptist Church in Austin, a congregation affiliated with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, participated in the Texas Support for Dreamers call to Congress Dec. 19.

Others included Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo and Liz Cedillo-Pereira, director of the Dallas Office of Welcoming Communities and Foreign Affairs.

The Trump administration announced in September the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program would end in March 2018. The program protects about 800,000 individuals, said Jacinta Ma, director of policy and advocacy for the National Immigration Forum.

## ‘Out of the shadows’

“They did what the government asked them to do,” Moore said. “They came out of the shadows and have contributed \$5 billion a year to the economy.”

DACA allowed children of undocumented workers to step forward, but failure to implement new laws that would allow them to stay in the United States would send them back into the dark, Acevedo said. That would damage the relationship immigrant communities have with law

enforcement, he noted.

Legalized immigration status helps state and local law enforcement to know residents better, and that allows public safety officers to operate more efficiently, he asserted.

“The very vast majority of DACA recipients are law-abiding and successful people who came to this nation as children and, but for their birthplace, are American through and through,” Acevedo said.

## **Contributions to U.S. emphasized**

Without immigration reform, the United States will be the loser, said Cedillo-Pereira. That’s why Congress needs to act now, she added.

Increasing numbers of Dreamers lose their hope of staying in the country every day Congress does not pass a new immigration reform, participants in the call insisted.

Because Dreamers see themselves as Americans, speak English as their main language and contribute to the economy, Moore believes they should stay in the country.

“If there is anyone who deserves this, it is the DACA recipients,” he said.

Moore is not alone in that opinion. A [CNN poll](#) released this month shows 83 percent of Americans support letting Dreamers stay in the country. That includes 68 percent of self-identified conservatives.

Moore believes without Dreamers, the unemployment rate would increase drastically, and the economy would not be as robust.

Five percent of DACA recipients have started their own businesses, and it increases to 8 percent for those who are 25 years or older. For the U.S.

population as a whole, the figure is 3.1 percent.

## **Need for immigration reform**

U.S. immigration laws are outdated and need to be updated—not only to provide better border security, but also so capable individuals, many of whom have given so much to the country already, can stay in the United States and work for its betterment, officials with the National Immigration Forum maintain.

Reform would involve fixing a broken work visa system, which currently does not account for the needed number of workers, nor is subject to the changes of economic growth, advocates insist.

The process is so time-consuming and expensive to obtain agricultural and temporary work visas, employers choose not to go through the hassle and instead bring in workers with no permit to work, they note.

Moore addressed the [projected](#) demographic changes, in which non-Anglos will make up more than 50 percent of the U.S. population by 2050.

“In 25 years, we will live in a much different Texas. It will even be a much different United States,” he said.

## **Guided by the Bible, not politics**

The same thing will be said about the church in the United States, Moore said, and he believes that is why Christians need to act now.

“Christ laid out the criteria for the separation of the sheep and the goats,” he said. “That criteria is how you treat the least of these.”

On the basis of his work with the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of

the Southern Baptist Convention and the Evangelical Immigration Table, Moore thinks Congress is getting closer to reforming immigration laws.

Republicans might be ready, Moore noted, but how far they will go depends on Democrats agreeing to increased border security.

However, he emphasized the importance of change beginning in the hearts of individuals. In particular, Christians need to allow God to reform their attitudes toward “those who are different than themselves,” he said.

“Be guided by the teaching of God’s word, rather than by the divisiveness of our politics,” Moore said.

The Bible illustrates how the people of God always are on the move, he noted. So, it is not surprising to see people move to the United States from countries plagued by war, famine and drug violence, he asserted.

After the command to worship God, the command most repeated in Scripture is to welcome the stranger, Moore observed.

“It is clear to me what we have to do here,” he said.