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L'Taken Speech 2018
Temple Beth Am
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Hello, thank you for hearing us today. I'm Justin, and I'm Mar, and we're here on behalf of the Religious Action Center and congregation Temple Beth Am from North Seattle. We are here today to speak with you about immigration issues in this country. This year, the Trump administration rescinded the DACA program that the Obama administration had previously established. This program, up until this past year, granted conditional legal status to immigrant minors, providing a path to citizenship. Now that the DACA program has been rescinded, many undocumented minors are no longer protected from deportation. We know that in the past, DACA was very successful, with almost 800 thousand undocumented minors receiving protection from the government. This protection in turn allowed for these recipients to join the work force, improve their economic position, and even enroll in school. These students were receiving bachelor's degrees and higher education because of the protection DACA provided. These children are motivated to give back to society, and are valuable members of our communities. The only nation they have ever resided in is the United States, and they would never want to live anywhere else. Our current administration has opened up the opportunity for these children to be deported to a country that they have never lived in before. Without the protection that DACA provided, these minors are living in fear of deportation, even when they are full members of American society. We believe that the DREAM act is the solution to this, and we believe that this act can greatly improve the quality of life for immigrant children. If enacted, the DREAM act would be an opportunity and a pathway to citizenship for over half a million

children in the US. This act would also give conditional citizenship to the minors previously protected by DACA.

As stated earlier, we are here on behalf of the Religious Action Center, and because we are Jews. As Jews, it is even more important that we support and pass a Clean Dream Act. Historically, the Jewish people have been persecuted and exiled from many lands and we know the struggle of not being accepted. As it states in Leviticus 19:34, "When strangers sojourn with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong... for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." We are outright commanded to welcome and protect all who come seeking safety and DREAMers fall perfectly under that distinction. What's more DREAMers aren't strangers in the slightest. They are part of our community, working, growing, and living just as we are. It is entirely unjust to deny these people the only life they've ever known, and as Jews, we know how important it is to create as welcoming society. Some of the critical tenets of Judaism are Chesed (kindness), and Hachnasat Orchim (hospitality), and supporting the passing of a Clean Dream Act is perfectly in line with those commandments.

Over the summer, I worked as a camp counselor at a day camp for inner city and underprivileged kids. The kids there were overwhelmingly minority groups, mostly Latino, and mostly children of undocumented immigrants. I specifically was working with the six and seven-year-old children. These were some of the sweetest, most entertaining and delightful kids I've ever worked with, and that's a hard distinction to come by. I enjoyed every moment of the two weeks I spent with them, and they were absolutely one of the highlights of my summer. But with the termination of DACA and no current replacement, they're at risk. Kids I spent the summer helping and protecting, and hundreds of thousands

like them have the very real threat of their life and future being snatched away because of circumstances they can't control. I repeat, these kids are six and seven. They're young, and they should be able to know they have a future in their home country. These children are already at so much of a disadvantage, due to factors not under their control, but at the very least they should be assured of a legitimate path to citizenship. Deportation is not a foreign concept to those kids. I remember them telling me about their cousin, who went to Mexico one day and never came back, and one of my co-counselors mentioning how the day after Trump's anti-immigration executive order, 40% of the kids in the district didn't come to school because their parents were afraid of being deported that very day. These kids live with the fear of losing their homes and families when they've done nothing wrong, and we have the ability to protect their future. We cannot make it harder for them, or try and take away the only life they know. Passing a Clean Dream Act would ensure that they and all the children like them have a future in America and a path for them to follow.

We hope that the Senator will co-sponsor the Dream Act of 2017 (Senate bill 1615). We believe that this is an urgent bill, and that action should be taken immediately in order to ensure the safety and well being of many immigrants. We hope that there is no gap between the end of DACA and the continued protection of immigrants. We want Congress to pass a Clean Dream Act, so that there are no added enforcement measures, or funding for a border wall. We believe that this clean bill will help hundreds of thousands of people gain citizenship to this country and continue living here.