Norcross, GA, July 21, 2017 — Yesterday, on July 20, Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) plan to introduce the 2017 DREAM Act to provide legal status and a pathway to citizenship for young undocumented immigrants who came to the country as children.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice, an affiliation of five civil rights organizations, released the following statement in response to the introduction of the 2017 DREAM Act:

“We applaud today’s bipartisan introduction of the DREAM Act by Senator Durbin and Senator Graham. It’s a strong bill that would provide undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children a path to citizenship.

The senators have stepped up to offer a solution when the DACA program is at risk of being terminated. We are dismayed that the president has already rejected this bill without having seen it.

We call on the administration to commit to continuing the DACA program as Trump initially indicated he would do. The administration should defend the close to 800,000 DACA recipients, 95 percent of whom are currently enrolled in school or working full-time jobs. Ending the DACA program without providing a solution for DACA recipients would be cruel and heartless.

This bill is a step in the right direction in fixing our broken immigration system. Along with saving the DACA program, Congress should offer pathways to citizenship for all 11 million undocumented immigrants, including 1.6 million undocumented Asian Americans. Congress should also provide meaningful due process to immigrants facing deportation; restore judicial discretion so judges may consider a person’s circumstances in deportation proceedings; and support sanctuary cities, which prevent law enforcement from detaining people without a warrant.

In addition to the DREAM Act and preserving DACA at the federal level, states also have the opportunity to consider policy that protects immigrants. In California, similar efforts are underway to protect undocumented immigrants through the California Values Act (SB 54), which would ultimately make California a sanctuary state. In Illinois, the bi-partisan TRUST Act passed the legislature and is now sitting on Governor Bruce Rauner's desk, waiting for his signature. The TRUST Act would draw a bright line between federal immigration enforcement and local police. Governor Rauner should sign this legislation immediately.

The immigration system is in need of many reforms to fix the decades of imbalanced and now inhumane treatment of immigrants who come to or are currently here in the U.S. We are heartened that the federal DREAM Act and state legislation like the Illinois TRUST Act and California Values Act offer steps towards creating an immigration system that treats immigrants with the fairness and dignity that all people deserve.”

About Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta (formerly Asian American Legal Advocacy Center or AALAC) is the first non-profit law center dedicated to Asian immigrants and refugees (“Asian Americans”) in the Southeast.
Our goal is to engage, educate and empower under-represented Asian Americans to greater civic participation.

We are one of five independent organizations that make up the national Asian Americans Advancing Justice. Together with our affiliates in Chicago, DC, Los Angeles and San Francisco, we bring more than 100 years of collective experience in addressing the civil rights issues faced by Asian Americans and other vulnerable and underserved communities. Visit www.advancingjustice-atlanta.org.