

UU Perspective on Immigration:

In 2013, the UUA statement of conscience states:

"A belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person is core to Unitarian Universalism: every person, no exceptions. As religious people, our Principles call us to acknowledge the immigrant experience and to affirm and promote the flourishing of the human family."

(<http://www.uua.org/statements/statements/288860.shtml>)

The Virginia Dream Act, in-state tuition for DACA recipients, is about giving talented, committed young people in Virginia an equal chance at a great education. Undocumented children who grew up here, who went to school here, who worked hard and did well in school here, deserve to pay in-state tuition at Virginia public colleges and universities. All Virginia students, including the military stationed here, deserve to be treated equally. Better educated students will be able to give back to the state that has given them an opportunity to succeed.

The Virginia Dream Act is about fairness to the children who call Virginia home. It is about growing our economy through better-educated students, and it is about having compassion for all Virginians.

The UU Legislative Ministry of Virginia will build and strengthen partnerships with interfaith and immigrant partner groups within our own communities. (<http://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org>) (<http://vacolao.org>) (<http://www.virginiaorganizing.org>) Among our activities are encouraging UU members to attend immigration briefing, forums; study of immigration history and issues (<http://nilc.org/inhouse20.html>); contact our state legislators about the issue (<http://www.virginiageneralassembly.gov>). The Legal Aid Justice Center's Immigrant Advocacy Program can be contacted at Edgar@justice4all.org. Edgar Aranda-Yanoc is also the chair of VACOLAO, the Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations (vacolao@gmail.com). Marco A. Grimaldo is with the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, and can be reached at marco@virginiainterfaithcenter.org, or office@virginiainterfaithcenter.org.

We begin our work by getting to know our local state delegates and senators, and advocating for our issues, by telephoning, writing and visiting local offices and those in Richmond. As a bill advances to committees, the opportunity will arise to speak before a committee or sub-committee, and to visit all of the representatives who will be voting on the bill. It is most important that we begin to build a relationship with our own legislators, since legislators are most attentive to their own constituents. It is also important that we develop talking points, so that we do not waste any of the 10-15 precious minutes we are given. We also need to develop media outreach, including writing letters to the editor, writing op-eds, speaking to the media as a UU. It is also vital that we develop the educational and advocacy efforts within our own church communities.