

Young undocumented immigrants in Austin rush to renew DACA status



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Patrik Perez, KVUE 7:31 PM. CST January 21, 2018

AUSTIN - Young undocumented immigrants across the U.S. are rushing to renew their DACA status in the middle of the government shutdown.

A week before, a federal judge's ruling temporarily blocked the Trump administration's effort to end DACA, which gave certain recipients a chance to renew their two-year work permit.

"People say we're here to steal our jobs, but we're just here to support our families," 17-year-old DACA recipient and Austin resident Jorge Vallejo said.

He's one of more than 120,000 DACA recipients in Texas.

"It's been really helpful. I've been able to work and help my parents out," he said.



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Some of that excitement has turned into fear.

"With the arrival of the new administration, and the anti-immigrant rhetoric that we have heard, as well as the decision to cancel the DACA program, a lot of uncertainty came because, for many immigrants, particularly Mexicans, DACA has almost been the only immigration relief that has been opened," Consul General of Mexico in Austin Carlos Gonzalez Gutierrez said.

The consulate, with the help of Texas Here to Stay, held a free DACA clinic on Sunday.

"We felt an extreme urge to hold one this weekend shortly after the news that DACA had been revived," volunteer Joseph Ramirez said. "There's an extreme urgency to fill it out right now. We have no clue what the future will hold."

Vallejo, along with dozens of other young undocumented immigrants, arrived at the consulate Sunday to complete his renewal application.

He said he has to wait a few months to find out whether it's been approved. And it's an uncertain future because the Department of Justice has asked the Supreme Court to review the federal judge's ruling.

"We have to keep fighting for this. And all those people that don't want to support us, you have to be more open-minded about that stuff," Vallejo said. "We're here to support our families, too, like they would support them."

Texas Here to Stay is hosting another free DACA renewal clinic on Saturday, Jan. 27, from 1-3 p.m. at Refugee Services of Texas on East Saint John's Avenue in Austin.

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