



Connecticut Attorney General William Tong talks about 'dreamers' on Tuesday at Eastern Connecticut State University. Courtesy of ECSU

'Dreamers' share their concerns

Attorney general visits ECSU to discuss DACA program

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WILLIMANTIC — Eastern Connecticut State University students shared their dreams with Connecticut Attorney General William Tong on Tuesday.

And those “dreamers,” the children of undocumented immigrants, hope they can continue building their lives in the country

they now consider home.

ECSU hosted a forum Tuesday featuring Tong, who spoke in favor of protections for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students in Connecticut and across the nation.

These children have been termed “dreamers” in recent years and they face uncertain futures following the 2016 elec-

tion of Donald Trump as president.

Tong spoke in favor of the DACA program and what he is doing to protect the program.

“The Trump administration’s attempt to revoke DACA is unlawful, wrong, cruel and pointless,” Tong said. “All of you here united today will send that message not just in Connecticut, but

all the way down to Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Supreme Court.”

Trump aims to end the DACA program, an Obama-era program that allows children of undocumented parents to stay in the United States to work and study.

Many ECSU students are scholarship recipients through

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TheDream.US Opportunity Scholarship Program.

The forum was held while the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in Connecticut's case to protect DACA.

Connecticut is one of 17 states that filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration in 2017 challenging the revocation of DACA.

Tong shared he is the son of an immigrant, an immigrant who once overstayed his tourist visa.

"If that happened today, you would call him 'undocumented' or 'illegal,'" Tong said. "How would they treat him today? More often

The United States provided me with so many opportunities that my country would never have. I am happy to call this place my home today.

Yineira Lopez

than not, now this country turns its back on people."

DACA recipient students Yineira Lopez, Maria Elena Ruiz Gonzalez and Yenimar Cortez spoke about how DACA has changed their lives, why they think the program should continue and how the program could be improved.

"The United States provided me

with so many opportunities that my country would never have," said Lopez, who is from Venezuela. "I am happy to call this place my home today."

Lopez said before she received DACA, she was in this "limbo" of living and planning her life.

However, some of that limbo still exists, as DACA recipients can only

plan their lives two years ahead.

"Hopefully, more of us will be able to go to college, obtain jobs, help the economy, buy cars and homes and build their lives in this country like they have been since they were 5 or 6 years old, like me," said Ruiz Gonzalez, who is from Mexico.

Eastern President Elsa Núñez said the university is fortunate to have this group of students.

"They have a cumulative GPA of 3.4, and a retention rate of 96 percent," Núñez said. "That's just as good as Harvard or Yale."

According to Núñez, Eastern was one of the first colleges that partic-

ipated in TheDream.US program and 200 Eastern students are currently scholarship recipients.

"The foundation's faith in Eastern has been rewarded by this impressive group of young Americans working to make a difference in our community and our nation," Núñez said.

The Supreme Court likely won't deliver a verdict until the springtime.

If the program is revoked, most DACA recipients will retain their two-year protection until the next presidential term begins.

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