Dear Americans,

I am writing to you as one of the people currently in the DACA program. Though I do not speak for all Dreamers, I want to share my story with you so that you have a better understanding of the immigration system as it is currently implemented.

Both my parents, but especially my father, were outspoken critics of the communist party in Eastern Europe and suffered the usual police beatings and harassment that accompanied such viewpoints. For those reasons and many others, my parents brought me with them, legally on a visa, to the United States in 1992 and filed for political asylum. I was seven years old at the time.

Our initial immigration court hearing was scheduled for May 13, 1996. Unfortunately, the lawyer we hired to handle our case completely mishandled our case and was berated by the judge for doing such a poor job. My mother decided to appeal the decision on her own.

My family did not hear from immigration officials for almost 10 years. In the meantime, my parents started their own small trucking company and grew it to the point where we employed other Americans. We always paid all our taxes, both personal and corporate. From the money my family's business generated, my parents were able to put me through private schooling for both middle school (Sycamore) and high school (Park Tudor).

I attended the University of Connecticut in 2005 for my freshman year, once again paid for by my parents, but I felt lost, and unsure of my place in the world. I decided that enlisting in the United States' Navy would be a good way to grow personally as well as serve my country. It was at this time, when the recruiter was going through my records, that I found out our appeal had been denied in 2001 and I no longer had legal status in America. I was shocked, neither my parents nor I had ever received any communication from USCIS that our appeal had been denied. We went to the immigration office downtown, where we were told to "go home and don't ask any more questions". My family met with multiple immigration lawyers from around the country to figure out what to do. They all said the same thing: "your options have run out, you just have to wait for universal amnesty".

I returned home to Indianapolis where I began to study economics and business at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. The immigration situation caused a lot of tension within our family as at a time when young men venture out to start their own lives, I was shackled to my parents because there was a clerical error which completely dropped me from the appeal. This left me with no status at all and no work authorization.

In 2010 ICE came to my family's home at 5 in the morning with assault rifles drawn and told my parents they had to leave the country. The administrative error meant that I had to spend the entire day in immigration jail because of the clerical error. When I was released, my parents and I met and paid more lawyers as well as meeting with our congressmen and senators. No one could do anything about the situation. On February 2 of 2011 my parents left the country. I have not seen them in seven years as I am not allowed to leave the country, and they are not allowed to enter.

Since that time I have finished my economics degree, am working part-time and am one semester away from finishing my triple major in business. After the passing of the DACA program in 2012, I pay $500 every two years to remain on the deferred action list and retain my

legal right to work. Any criminal activity disqualifies me from the program and shuffles me straight to the top of the deportation list.

These last few years have been tough. Until the DACA program was enacted I did not even have the right to work and support myself. There are few things in this world that will break a young man faster than not even being able to take care of oneself. I see my peers advancing in life, becoming the people they want to be; while I am stuck in a whirlpool of uncertainty in a seemingly hopeless situation where I will never be allowed to be a part of the only country I have ever known as home. This constant malaise has lead to some serious psychological problems. I have become chronically depressed, overweight and have attempted to take my life a handful of times now.

When President Trump announced that he would be ending DACA, my heart sank. While what he has done is bitter, I understand his reasoning for it: former President Obama, as a professor of Constitutional law, was correct in citing multiple precedents of the government offering deferred sentencing as the basis for initiating DACA. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the legislative branch of our government to write the laws, including immigration laws. When people like myself and my parents who came here legally, do everything as it is supposed to be done and achieve the American dream find ourselves in the situation we are currently in, the system is broken. Congress has had multiple chances to pass the Dream Act over the past few decades, which would create a path to citizenship for people like myself and to enact meaningful immigration reform. They have not. If they had, DACA would never even have been needed.

The system is broken not just because it fails decent people like my family, it is broken because it also lets in disreputable people and then has no way of holding them accountable. In the spring of 2012, my late friend and I took my parents' car to grab a bite to eat. In a most ironic twist of faith, as we were sitting at a red light, we were rear-ended by a vehicle driven by two drunk illegal immigrants. After the collision, they tried speeding away. We had to chase them down and get them to pull over. When the police arrived, neither man had insurance or I.D., but the police could only arrest the driver. The passenger was allowed to simply walk away.

I do not support a lot of the things President Trump stands for, but on this point he is correct: there can be no functioning immigration system without a secure border. A secure border is essential to the ability of any country to keep immigrants accountable because it creates an identity for each person. Once a person has an identity, they have a history and from that history a judgement can be made if they are a good fit for the country. I don't know if the wall is the most efficient, but a physical barrier of some sort is needed (we have technology that can complement the physical barrier), so that system of accountability can be established.

I do not want to be construed as endorsing xenophobia with my previous statement. In fact I would like to point out that what sets America apart from all other countries is the fact that it was founded not on blood ties, but on ideas; on principles. Even though America has at times not lived up to its own principles, it is still a very special country, and for better or worse, it is home for us Dreamers.

I'm sure this letter has at times shocked both the political left and right, but that is one of the things that this country could use more of: candid views based on facts. There are deep wounds in this country currently that need healing, and I would like to help them heal. I can

begin by lending Congress my personal experiences to help them come up with a lasting piece of legislation that addresses the plight of all Dreamers as well as creates a sensible, functioning immigration system. As long as this country doesn't give up on me, I won't give up on it.

Sincerely,

Kristian Radoulov