

March 22, 2018

Trailways/Greyhound Station
Peter Valkowski, Terminal
Manager
186 Cumberland Street, Rochester,



Dear Mr. Valkowski,

The Rochester Rapid Response Network, a local group committed to protecting and defending immigrants, writes you to address an urgent and pressing matter. We have learned of accounts by witnesses of the Border Patrol racially profiling, harassing, and targeting people of color and people who speak languages other than English at the downtown Rochester Greyhound/Trailways bus station, and we are deeply concerned.

For example, we learned of a recent incident in which a student with DACA was interrogated about her status and forced to produce paperwork on the spot, holding up the bus. In another incident an elderly couple (age 64) were on their way to visit their brother when they were taken into custody in Rochester. We witnessed Border Patrol go into the waiting room and single out the only group of Mexicans who were there waiting and ignoring all others. We have also heard of groups like UR DREAMers who have been coordinating safe rides and carpools for undocumented and DACAmented students on campus who want to go home to visit their families over the holidays, but are not able to do so because they fear facing border patrol. It is heartbreaking to know that students have to stay on campus instead of going home with their loved ones. We are attaching a statement from the UR DREAMers about the impact of the Border Patrol presence at the bus station.

This routine terror at the hands of Border Patrol instills fear in community members who are simply traveling for work or visiting loved ones. Additionally, Border Patrol's practices at the bus station go against their own written policy that prohibits them from "considering race or ethnicity in law enforcement, investigation, and screenings." Bus and train tickets in the hands of passengers of color should not be treated as invitations for racial profiling and harassment, nor should they be turned into one-way tickets to detentions and deportations. This must end.

As reputable leaders in the transportation industry, we know you at Greyhound and Trailways take your commitment and responsibility for customer safety and satisfaction seriously. We urge you to continue to demonstrate your long-standing leadership by calling for the removal of

Border Patrol from your buses and the station as a whole. Invasive searches, intimidation, and racial harassment impair your customers' ability to get from one destination to another. As evidenced above, these abhorrent practices either delay or keep passengers altogether from important career opportunities or the loving arms of family. You cannot provide first-rate customer service nor can you honor the dignity of your customers while Border Patrol is allowed to freely roam the station and park their vehicles in the parking lot day and night.

Mayor Lovely Warren has demonstrated leadership in declaring Rochester a sanctuary city. This means that city resources will not be used to tear immigrant families and communities apart. If Rochester is to truly be a city where all immigrants and people are welcome and can live and travel without fear, then Greyhound/Trailways should take leadership in preventing them from being present. We sincerely hope that your company does not want to revive or revisit a dark time in this country's past when some residents were subjected to racist and unequal treatment on buses just because of their skin color. If Border Patrol is allowed to harass your customers, sadly, we will be right back at that dark moment in our nation's past.

We hope you will take this opportunity to lead other upstate cities by example, and make the Trailways/Greyhound station safe for all passengers.

Sincerely,

The Rochester Rapid Response Network
RocRapidResponse@gmail.com

UR DREAMers
idreamur@gmail.com



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Trailways/Greyhound Station
City of Rochester

Rochester, NY -- University of Rochester group UR DREAMers

UR DREAMers exists to provide a support system for students that are undocumented or have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. We work to correct misconceptions about the undocumented community and to push for immigration reform at the University of Rochester campus and in the City of Rochester.

Since last year, UR DREAMers has coordinated safe rides for undocumented and DACAmented students to spend the holidays with their loved ones. In the weeks leading to the Spring break, a DACA recipient and University of Rochester student who prefers to remain anonymous was questioned on a Trailways bus by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) about her immigration status.

“My parents back home were frantically trying to find the letter that proved I had DACA approval because the officer said none of my 3 IDs were sufficient proof. In all, it was probably the most afraid I've ever been,” she said. Although she had her DACA work authorization card, border patrol agents insisted that she had to show her DACA approval letter in order to verify her status and let her go.

All these students want is to go home to be with their families and friends during the holidays. Due to the fear of facing CBP, undocumented/DACAmented students are forced to stay on campus during break, in student housing.

As undocumented students in college, we struggle with a heavy burden of stress and responsibility. We cannot receive visits from our parents and live with constant fear of being questioned about our status, and the ongoing fear and threat of interacting with CBP. We should not have to fear going anywhere around our Community! This is a clear attack on the basic human right to travel and move freely. Students should not have to compromise their breaks and their studies because a bus company decides to cooperate with an agency that instills fear.

We demand that Greyhound, Trailways, and any other bus company not allow CBP to access their property to question passengers who look like immigrants. Border Patrol is enforcing the Trump's administration agenda to harass and intimidate immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants.

If this type of oppression continues on the part of these bus companies, we will encourage more and more students to choose alternate modes of transportation whether documented or not! We also ask the City of Rochester to follow through with its promise and commitment to protect undocumented immigrants including denouncing these companies that work with the oppressive juggernaut that is border patrol.

As well, we ask Mayor Lovely Warren, County Executive Cheryl Dinolfo and all Rochesterian to publicly announce that Western New York will not tolerate this type of inhuman treatment of our fellow human. We ask our elected officials to take a stand with us and push for more protections and policies to help Undocumented peoples in the greater Rochester area.

Sincerely,

UR DREAMers

idreamur@gmail.com