

Schumer pleads for the McAllisters

By [Ray O'Hanlon](#)

Senator Charles Schumer has intervened in the McAllister family deportation case by asking the Department of Homeland Security to grant Belfast man Malachy McAllister and two of his four children more time in the U.S.

Schumer's eleventh hour intervention came as the McAllisters were facing imminent deportation back to Ireland and in the midst of frantic efforts by supporters to secure some form of relief for the family from Congress.

Schumer, in a letter to Immigration and Customs Enforcement director, Julie Myers, urged "deferred action" in the marathon McAllister case. He urged ICE not to Deport McAllister and his family on humanitarian and safety grounds.

McAllister fears a return to his native city because of loyalist death threats. The family fled Belfast in 1988 after loyalist gunmen fired indiscriminately into their home.

In his letter, Schumer urged Myers, who is also ranked as an assistant secretary of homeland security, (to use her prosecutorial discretion to stay deportation proceedings and grant "deferred action" status to Malachy McAllister and his children.

The letter followed a phone call from Schumer to Myers pressing the family's case. Having exhausted legal appeals, the McAllisters face immediate deportation unless ICE and DHS stay proceedings.

"I talked yesterday with Secretary Julie Myers and made a strong case to grant the McAllisters deferred action status. It is the humane thing to do, and the right thing to do, and I will continue to press the issue with DHS," said Schumer in a statement.

"Malachy has made a life here, is a valued member of the community and it makes no sense to send him back into harm's way," Schumer, New York's senior senator, added.

Schumer's call, and his letter to ICE, follows an earlier letter he sent to DHS requesting that the McAllisters not be deported. According to a statement from his office, Schumer's request is in keeping with previous decisions under the Clinton administration.

Similar cases involving former political prisoners facing deportation to Northern Ireland, it said, were resolved by suspending the deportation proceedings and allowing them to remain in America with their families.

The McAllisters have been in the U.S. since 1996. They had first fled to Canada after loyalist gunmen fired 26 shots into the family home while three of the four children were inside with their grandmother.

McAllister and his children face deportation after an immigration court denied an appeal against deportation. The Board of Immigration Appeals reversed a previous court decision to grant asylum to McAllister's wife Bernadette and the couple's four children.

The children had been in line to receive asylum under their mother Bernadette's successful application, but lost the chance when Bernadette died from cancer in 2004. According to the statement from Schumer's office, Malachy McAllister and his family have been model citizens.

"He founded a successful business and they involved themselves in the community on many matters, including immigration reform and community work. Two of his children are still enrolled in secondary school and his other sons are married to American citizens," the statement said.

"And it continued: "However, if the McAllisters are deported to Northern Ireland, the family faces a continued threat from ongoing loyalist paramilitary operations. While the Peace Process has worked, and there is a functioning government in the North, unlike the IRA, the various armed loyalist militias that attempted to kill Malachy and his family are still armed, have not renounced violence, and, according to international monitors, continue to direct sophisticated criminal activities in Northern Ireland."

The statement noted that loyalist threats had followed the McAllisters "even here to the United States."

It stated that a loyalist terror group, the Red Hand Defenders, had emailed a threat against the McAllisters to the Irish Echo stating: "We won't miss next time."