

San Antonio Express-News

COMMENTARY: KEEP TEXAS STRONG; PASS DREAM ACT

By Glenn Hamer

San Antonio Express-News

April 17, 2021

As representatives of business organizations across Texas, we thank congressional members of both political parties seeking to fix our broken immigration system. We remain committed to working with you to protect our nation's Dreamers, and we urge the passage of the Dream Act of 2021.

For too long, our immigration system has failed Texas' businesses and communities, even as immigrants have played crucial roles in our essential workforce and COVID-19 response.

Texas is home to more than 4.9 million immigrants — one of the largest immigrant populations in the nation, according to census data. This includes more than 106,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program recipients, who are young immigrants who came to the U.S. as children.

Congress must recognize the immense contributions of the immigrant community in our state by providing an earned pathway to citizenship for Dreamers.

The bipartisan Dream Act, recently reintroduced by U.S. Sens. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., would achieve just this. Providing Dreamers with an avenue toward an earned pathway to citizenship would finally give DACA recipients and all those who rely on them much-needed certainty following years of being stuck in legal limbo.

It would also ensure that Dreamers can continue working, paying taxes and living in the only nation they know as home.

We have an immense opportunity to finally push the Dream Act over the finish line — and it could not come at a more important time. About 30,600 DACA recipients are working in essential industries such as farming, health care, education and construction.

In addition to their essential contributions, DACA recipients are making immense economic contributions.

If Texas' DACA recipients were removed, it would result in an annual GDP loss of \$6.1 billion, as well as the loss of the \$244.7 million in state and local taxes they pay annually,

according to research by the Center for American Progress and Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.

Nearly three-fourths of voters believe in protecting these young immigrants, according to a Pew Research Center poll. Though the Biden administration has provided DACA recipients with temporary relief, the program is still at risk; a federal court ruling handed down by Judge Andrew Hanen in Houston could come at any minute.

We have a unique opportunity at hand to build a commonsense approach to immigration that keeps families safe and together, grows our economy, supports our recovery and contributes to a robust workforce — and the time to act is now.

That is why we — the Texas Association of Business, **Texas Business Leadership Council**, San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, North Texas Commission, Rio Grande Valley Partnership and Greater Houston Partnership — have come together to call on the Senate to immediately provide a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients and DACA-eligible individuals through the passage of the bipartisan Dream Act.

We understand that no bill is perfect, but we strongly believe this existing bipartisan bill is the best framework to protect Dreamers rather than starting over with new legislation.

Glenn Hamer is president and CEO of the Texas Association of Business.