



## **CELEBRATE IMMIGRANTS BY PASSING LEGISLATION FOR DREAMERS**

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Most Texans have an immigrant story, whether you came to this country last year or your ancestors sailed here a century ago. The common thread is that these migrants had the courage to leave their home and come to America to work toward a better life for themselves and their children. Recognizing this drive and the lasting contributions immigrants have made and continue to make in our great state is what the eighth-annual Immigrant Heritage Month celebrates this June.

The countless contributions of Texan immigrants have long fueled our strong state economy. Texan immigrants paid \$13.1 billion in state and local taxes and held \$120.3 billion in spending power in 2019. Further, our state's 389,165 immigrant entrepreneurs are actively creating jobs so more people can have a steady paycheck.

However, our state economy is put at risk by congressional inaction on important immigration reform. In addition to being Immigrant Heritage Month, this June also marks the nine-year anniversary of the launch of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that allows Dreamers, young immigrants who came here as children, to apply for and obtain temporary legal status that allows them to legally live and work in the U.S. DACA's creation has allowed for more than 100,000 Texan Dreamers to participate in the state's commerce and pursue other career and educational opportunities. The result: a stronger and more competitive Texan economy.

Unfortunately, the current program is only a temporary solution to a long-standing problem. Without congressional action to make the DACA program permanent, Dreamers are in a constant state of uncertainty about their legal status. Despite a Supreme Court decision in support of the program last June, DACA is threatened once again as a verdict from U.S. District Court Judge Andrew Hanen of Texas could take DACA protections away from those who grew up in this country and are productive members of our communities. We need immigrant workers and their capital now more than ever as we recover from the devastating COVID-19 pandemic.

Many of the DACA recipients directly threatened by the verdict have been on the front lines of the pandemic, fighting the virus and supporting essential industries like health care, transportation, warehousing, manufacturing, and waste management. Just in Texas alone, there are 4,300 DACA recipients working in health care

occupations and 2,800 recipients working as teachers educating our children. Without DACA protections, these workers will be stripped of their occupational permits, shut off to future work and educational possibilities, and ultimately face deportation and separation from their families. Losing these workers is estimated to cost \$6.2 billion to the state's GDP and take away \$78,260,000 in state and local taxes.

Further, dismantling DACA and discouraging immigrants from getting an education and working will have disastrous consequences for our social programs like Social Security. With the ratio of seniors to working-age adults increasing, it is crucial that we are proactive with our immigration policy before sacrifice our competitive position in the global economy. Establishing an earned pathway to citizenship for Dreamers will also keep families safe and together.

The [Texas Business Leadership Council](#) is once again urging Congress to come together and pass legislation, like the Dream Act, that provides the permanent security and pathway to citizenship that Dreamers need to thrive in our nation. As an organization focused on researching and supporting policy that helps business owners of all sizes, we prioritize the bottom line. Our analysis demonstrates the Texas and national economies need a legislative solution to immigration reform. Another year without a permanent solution for these immigrants means another year of leashed economic potential at a time when our markets desperately need additional labor and innovation.

In Texas, we mean business. Our economy cannot afford to lose the significant contributions of our immigrant workforce. Recognizing the importance of Immigrant Heritage Month reminds us of our own families' immigrant stories and requires us to stress the urgency of immigration reform today, especially as we meet the ninth anniversary of the DACA program. Pro-business Texans must unite and press Congress, especially our Senators, to push and pass legislation that allows Dreamers to help our economy grow and be globally competitive in the long-term.