

# Rio Grande

## GUARDIAN

### International News Service

#### **SERAFY: UNCERTAINTY FOR DREAMERS IS COSTING MY BUSINESS AND THE TEXAS ECONOMY**

By [Nick Serafy](#)

*The Rio Grande Guardian*

*April 21, 2021*

“Juan” was a bright young man who started working for my company as a packaging logistics clerk right out of high school, earning money to help his family and to pay for college. He caught on quickly and soon became one of the most efficient members of my team. I called him in to discuss a promotion.

That was when he told me something I didn’t expect: he couldn’t accept our offer because of the uncertain future of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which was allowing him to work for us legally. In fact, he was getting ready to leave Brownsville and Texas altogether so that, in the event the government were to end DACA — something the Trump administration tried to do twice — he wouldn’t be anywhere near the border.

I was taken aback. As someone who has been involved in immigration policy for three decades, I had closely followed the fate of the DACA program, which lets young people who were brought to the U.S. before 2012 work and study here so long as they obey our laws and pay their taxes. But I had no idea that one of my employees was a DACA recipient.

Businesses like ours are yet another victim of the federal government’s repeated failure to enact a legislative solution to resolve the uncertainty around Dreamers’ status. We thought Juan would have a long-term career at our company. Even if he didn’t stay with us forever, he would have gained skills that he could have taken with him to strengthen Texas’s workforce.

Juan’s departure was a loss to my company, to our community, and to Texas. And it’s a cautionary tale of what will happen to more Texas businesses if our Senators don’t prioritize DACA and find a way to keep this American-trained talent in the country.

This affects all of us. My business supplies quality biological materials to thousands of hospitals, doctors’ offices, and clinical laboratories across the country. We develop, manufacture, and distribute close to half a million test kits per year. When Juan left, it took us six months to replace him and get the new employee trained, and another 12-24 months to get them to the same level Juan was at when he left. This time could have been much better utilized, especially during the pandemic.

Current immigration policy makes it harder to find and hire talented workers by artificially limiting the talent pool. It also makes growing my business a challenge because it creates a risk — one that Congress could easily eliminate — that employees I hire won’t be able to stay in the U.S. for the long term.

This wasn’t always a partisan issue. I have served on ad-hoc immigration reform committees for both President George W. Bush and former Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and joined business leaders Eddie Aldrete and Dennis Nixon in advocating for immigration reform. But it is evident that immigration is now a political football, an issue both parties always want to talk about but never want to solve. We deserve better.

Politically speaking, this should be low-hanging fruit.

DREAM legislation is widely popular across the country among both voters and business leaders. We cannot keep losing out on talent and money because of politics. Congressional inaction for Dreamers has already cost my company a great employee. Further inaction would cost our state over \$963 million a year, which is how much Texas Dreamers contribute in federal, state, and local taxes annually.

I’m proud to have joined the Texas Opportunity Coalition last month to call on Congress to enact a permanent protection for our Dreamers. The House of Representatives has already passed a Dream Act with bipartisanship, and I urge Senators Cornyn and Cruz to stand with Texas businesses like mine and support the bipartisan Dream Actbill in the Senate. This bill is an important starting point for bipartisan discussion that will finally give Dreamers like Juan, and businesses like mine, the certainty we need to grow and prosper in Texas.

*Editor’s Note: The above guest column was penned by [Nick Serafy](#), CEO of Proficiency Testing Service, Inc. in Brownsville and a member of the Texas Opportunity Coalition. The TOC unites businesses, institutions, executives, and leaders from across Texas who are dedicated to passing a federal congressional DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act that provides permanent legal status to Dreamers. The column appears in The Rio Grande Guardian with the permission of the author. Serafy can be reached by email via: [nick@serafy.com](mailto:nick@serafy.com).*