



The Financial Contributions of Dreamers: What the U.S. Economy Stands to Lose

Credit: Jeff Bruno/CNS

Update: [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals](#) (DACA) was implemented in 2012; The Trump Administration attempted to end DACA on September 5, 2017, allowing one-time renewal for those whose status was set to expire between September 5, 2017 and March 5, 2018. For nearly three years the attempt to terminate DACA was the subject of litigation and multiple nationwide preliminary injunctions. In a [decision](#) issued on June 18, 2020, the Supreme Court issued a ruling that has at least temporarily prevented the Administration from ending the program. Although the DACA program is safe from elimination for the time being, it is essential that the U.S. Senate act to provide more permanent protection to DACA recipients.

Now more than ever it is imperative that the Senate passes legislation that will provide permanent relief to DACA and Dreamer youth. USCCB supports Dreamers and has advocated for the DREAM Act and H.R. 6 the American Dream and Promise Act.

How much do DACA-eligible immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy?

DACA recipients bring in billions of dollars to the U.S. economy every year. Currently, DACA youth alone add an estimated \$42 billion to the GDP every year¹. This means that the positive economic contributions of DACA recipients are almost six times more than the roughly \$7 billion that program costs the United States. If DACA were to be ended in the United States, the U.S. economy, the loss to the economy could be as much as \$21 billion.²

What are some of the ways that DACA-eligible immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy?

(1) Paying Taxes

DACA recipients contribute billions of dollars to the economy every year. One of the most common ways is

through the paying of taxes. Despite common misunderstanding, undocumented immigrants pay billions of dollars in federal and state taxes. In 2017, the New American Economy found that DACA eligible individuals contributed \$4 billion in taxes for that year - almost \$2 billion of that amount being contributions to state and local taxes.³

(2) Participation in Workforce

Participation in the workforce is another major way that DACA recipients contribute to the national economy. Most immigrants who receive legal status under DACA are employed in some capacity. As of 2017, the employment rate of DACA-eligible individuals stood at 93%.⁴ This rate was 33% higher than that year's average employment rate for the U.S. population as a whole.⁵

(3) Creating Jobs

DACA eligible individuals aren't only working for other businesses: in 2017, 5% of the DACA eligible population owned their own businesses - a higher percentage than their U.S. born counterparts.⁶ The type of employment that DACA recipients pursue cross dozens of disciplines, from agriculture, to education, to healthcare.

(4) Consumer Spending

The DACA eligible population also contributes through their spending on goods and services in the U.S. economy. The United States relies on consumer spending to function, as it affects virtually every part of the economy. In 2017 alone, the DACA-eligible population earned 23.4 billion dollars, which translates to 19.4 billion dollars in spending power after taxes⁷.

Why Does the Church Support Dreamers?

The Catholic Church's support of Dreamers stems from the belief of the inherent human dignity of every person and the need to protect the vulnerable, including children. Dreamers were brought to the United States as children and should be allowed to continue to achieve their God-given potential. In 2018, Bishop Vásquez of Austin, then Chairman of the Committee on Migration (USCCB/COM), stated: "As a nation, we have a moral and humanitarian obligation to Dreamers. These young people have steadfastly worked to improve themselves and our country and attempted in good faith to comply with the law. Their futures hang in the balance." On June 18, 2020, in [response](#) to the U.S. Supreme Court finding the Administration's attempted rescission of the program was unlawful, Archbishop Gomez President of USCCB and Bishop Dorsonville, Chair of the USCCB/COM stated: "Through today's decision and beyond, we will continue to accompany you and your families. You are a vital part of our Church and our community of faith."

How Can You Help Protect Dreamers?

(1) Contact Your Senator and Urge Legislative Action

A pathway to citizenship would provide security and hope for the hundreds of thousands of DACA recipients who have not only made a home in this country, but have actively worked to provide for its economy. A significant way to help DACA recipients is to advocate with your Senator for legislative action that would protect Dreamers. Last year, the House of Representatives passed a bill, H.R. 6, the "American Dream and Progress Act", that would give all Dreamers a pathway to citizenship. However, the Senate has not yet passed any legislative protection for Dreamers. One of the best things you can do for DACA recipients right now is to contact your Senators and ask them to support the Dream Act. See www.justiceforimmigrants.org for our Action Alert.

(2) Learn more about Dreamers

You can find information about DACA and the Dreamers through [resources on the Justice For Immigrants website](#).

You can also use the form located at the bottom of this page to sign up for information and updates from JFI. By staying informed, you will have the tools you need to better advocate to protect Dreamers.

(3) Pray for Dreamers and the Protection of all Vulnerable Groups

Suggested [prayers](#) for the protection of Dreamers can be found on the JFI website in English and in Spanish.

Endnotes

1 Jacqueline Varas & Usama Zafar, “Estimating the Economic Contributions of DACA Recipients,” AMERICAN ACTION FORUM (December 21, 2017), available at <https://www.americanactionforum.org/research/estimating-economic-contributions-daca-recipients/>

2 *Id.*

3 NEW AMERICAN ECONOMY, OVERCOMING THE ODDS: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF DACA-ELIGIBLE IMMIGRANTS AND TPS HOLDERS TO THE U.S. ECONOMY 4 (2019), available at https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/DACA-TPS_Brief.pdf

4 *Id.* at 3.

5 *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, U.S. DEP’T OF LABOR, BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS12300000>, (Last accessed March 31, 2020).

6 NEW AMERICAN ECONOMY, OVERCOMING THE ODDS: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF DACA-ELIGIBLE IMMIGRANTS AND TPS HOLDERS TO THE U.S. ECONOMY 5 (2019), available at https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/DACA-TPS_Brief.pdf

7 *Id.* at 4.