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## How big business is trying to convince Congress to save the ‘Dreamers’ from Trump

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Business leaders across industries, from tech to agriculture, are appealing to Congress to protect nearly 800,000 undocumented workers from deportation as President Trump is expected on Tuesday to announce a plan to revoke their permission to work.

The Trump administration has indicated it would phase out the five-year-old Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which allowed immigrants who have lived in the United States illegally since they were children to work without punishment.

Politico first reported Sunday night that Trump plans to rescind the program but delay enforcement for six months to give Congress time to pass legislation to replace the Obama-era provision.

“This is not the end of the story. Congress can act today,” said Jeremy Robbins, executive director of New American Economy in an interview Monday. “We have been gearing up for this big fight that we hope is coming.”

Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced on Sept. 5 that the Trump administration is rescinding Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, calling the program “an open-ended circumvention of immigration laws.” (Photo: Melina Mara/The Washington Post)

Robbins said the national business coalition, founded by former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg to advocate for immigration reform, will have more than 100 corporate and conservative leaders lined up in at least 15 states by Tuesday to begin pressuring Congress to act.

The lobbying will take the form of private meetings both in Washington and in members’ home districts, letters to member of Congress, newspaper op-eds and public events, Robbins said.

The renewed pressure on Congress comes on top of a petition that more than 400 business executives — from Apple, Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon and other companies — have signed urging Trump and Congress to protect the “Dreamers,” 97 percent of whom are in school or in the workforce.

Over the weekend, executives from a diverse array of companies, including AT&T, Wells Fargo, Best Buy, Ikea and Kaiser Permanente, added their names to the letter.

*[Hundreds of business leaders call on Trump to protect 'dreamers']*

On Sunday, Apple chief executive Tim Cook tweeted: “250 of my Apple coworkers are #Dreamers. I stand with them. They deserve our respect as equals and a solution rooted in American values.”

At Microsoft, at least 27 employees — including software engineers, finance professionals and retail associates — are beneficiaries of DACA, Brad Smith, Microsoft president and chief legal officer, wrote in an earlier blog post. Ending the program, he said, would be a “step backwards for our entire nation.”

At least 72 percent of the top 25 Fortune 500 companies count DACA recipients among their employees, according to FWD.us, which organized the petition.

Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg, Microsoft founder Bill Gates and other tech leaders co-founded FWD.us in 2013 to push for comprehensive immigration reform.

“We’re also calling on Congress to finally pass the Dream Act or another permanent, legislative solution that Dreamers deserve,” Zuckerberg wrote in a Facebook post last week publicizing the petition. “These young people represent the future of our country and our economy.”

Since Trump took office in January, his administration has renewed the protected status of an estimated 200,000 DACA recipients. He plans to announce Tuesday that his administration would no longer renew the two-year permits -- although there remains a possibility that Trump could change his mind at the last minute.

Trump has publicly wrestled with what to do about the program, given that the vast majority of Americans, including his supporters, favor protecting Dreamers in some form.

While he promised during his campaign to end the deferred-action program on his first day of office because he said it was an unconstitutional abuse of executive authority, Trump on Friday told reporters in the Oval Office, “We love the Dreamers.”

His surrogates on Sunday made the argument that ending the DACA program would benefit American workers, even as some congressional Republicans advocated for legislation to keep it intact.

Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) said in a statement Monday, “Americans do not hold children legally accountable for the actions of their parents.”

“The Legislative and Executive Branch should put aside passivity and partisanship and finally modernize our immigration laws,” Lankford said.

Rep. Mike Coffman (R-Colo.) said last week he would attempt to force action on a bill to protect Dreamers when Congress returns from August recess this week. House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) said Congress is working on a legislative solution. Sens. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) have also urged their colleagues to take immediate action to protect the young undocumented immigrants.

“It is incredibly disappointing to use the potential deportation of Dreamers as a pawn to form immigration legislation, but I do think a deadline could force their hand in having to act,”

Robbins said. “The second that it leaked that the president was leaning towards ending DACA, the dam opened.”

Business leaders and some economists pushed back on the idea that ending DACA would help American workers. Many American jobs depend on the work that Dreamers are doing, said David Bier, an immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank.

“If you take those DACA recipients away, you will end up with lower wages and fewer jobs for Americans, not more jobs,” Bier said. “Having more people contributing to the economy is the thing that ultimately allows for greater employment for more Americans.”

Employers would bear the cost of ending DACA, which Bier estimates at \$6.3 billion because of worker turnover.

“Employers will have to fire all those people. It doesn’t seem to be much of a reprieve as they are waiting for Congress to act,” said Mike Gempler, executive director of the Washington Growers League in Yakima, Wash.

Gempler said he hopes the Trump administration will leave the work permits in place during the six-month window it is giving Congress to come up with a permanent fix.

Rescinding DACA would also have long-term economic consequences, Bier said, because taking away work authorizations would discourage young immigrants from seeking higher education. That would lead to decreased salaries, he said, which means the amount they pay in taxes will also go down.

FWD.us estimates that without DACA recipients in the workforce, the economy would lose \$460.3 billion from the national gross domestic product and \$24.6 billion in Social Security and Medicare tax contributions.

“For a president who says he is all about economic growth and job creation, the issue with immigration isn’t just an emotional argument, it’s actually an economic one,” said Erika Lucas, founder and chief executive of StitchCrew, an Oklahoma City-based firm connecting tech companies in the Midwest with venture capital investors. “He doesn’t understand that this is an economic situation impacting a lot of his constituents.”

That will be the focus of the business community’s pitch to Congress as it considers immigration legislation, she said. Lucas said the economic impact of rescinding DACA would be felt across industries in all geographic regions of the country.

Without DACA, she said, “what we’re doing is going further down the path of creating this shadow economy.”