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Commentary: As DACA reaches the Supreme Court, Congress must keep the American Dream alive for new generations of immigrants

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Born in Russia, my grandfather came to the United States in the 1800s as a poor, Jewish immigrant pursuing the promise of economic opportunity, religious freedom and a better life for his family. My grandfather spent his life doing back-breaking work in a sweatshop, and it is only through his resilience, perseverance and hardworking spirit that the generations after him were able to succeed.

Our family story is not unique. It is the same story of millions of immigrants from all over the world, who have come to the United States in pursuit of refuge and opportunity, not only for themselves, but for their children, grandchildren and the generations to come. However, their dreams — the same dreams that brought my grandfather to our shores — are now being held hostage by political gamesmanship in Washington.

The Supreme Court will hear oral arguments on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program on Tuesday. Tied up with that decision are the fates of the young people known as “Dreamers” who came to this country as children and have known no other home. Since 2012, the DACA program has allowed Dreamers to come out of the shadows by providing them with the right to work and delivering them from the fear of deportation.

They are students, doctors, lawyers and business owners, and of the approximately 700,000 currently protected by DACA, 43,000 **are entrepreneurs who are creating jobs** for the U.S. economy. They contribute more than \$4 billion in local, state, and federal taxes every year. According to the libertarian think tank Cato Institute, the cost to the U.S. economy of ending DACA and deporting its beneficiaries **would be \$280 billion** over the next 10 years. We cannot let the court’s decision force these young people back into the shadows. We need congressional action to offer a pathway to citizenship not only for current DACA recipients, but for the more than 2 million immigrant children too young to have applied for this program. DACA cannot be resolved by litigation, threats or capitulation on either side. It can only be resolved by comprehensive immigration reform legislation.

It is this belief that led me to become a steering committee member of the Chicago-based American Business Immigration Coalition, in order to elevate the voices of business leaders in promoting common-sense immigration reform that is not only morally right, but also good for our economy.

Our nation prides itself on being the “land of opportunity” — a safe haven for the persecuted, and a place where the children of poor immigrants can reliably build a better future for themselves and their family. That is the story of my own family and millions of others.

Eventually our nation will need to decide if we really want immigrants to have the same opportunities afforded my family. If we deny that opportunity to the immigrants of today, we not only lose sight of our founding principles, but also inflict long-term damage on our nation. It is time for Congress to step up and take action, and that starts with protecting Dreamers.