

Dreamers want a future in Iowa. We should let them

Greg Christy and Erik Hoekstra

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Olivia and David* are model college students. Olivia is a peer tutor and a leader in Northwestern College's multicultural efforts and events. A double major in art and psychology, she plans to attend graduate school and open an art therapy practice to serve inner-city children and teens. David is a Dordt College exercise science major who's been diligent in his studies and a leader on his athletic team. He also volunteers in the community and plans to start his own business after he graduates.

Olivia and David are also undocumented.

Olivia came to the United States from Mexico when she was 3 years old and has since lived in the Midwest. David's family is from Colombia, but he's spent almost his entire life in Texas.

Through no decision of their own, the U.S. is the only home Olivia and David have known. When Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was created, they — along with many others in similar situations — registered with the federal government and underwent thorough background checks in exchange for work authorization and protection from deportation.

Olivia, David and the other 2,796 DACA recipients living in Iowa contribute to our campus communities and hope to have a future in the U.S. — if Congress will let them.

There are numerous reasons why Congress should act now to pass a permanent, legislative solution for DACA recipients and other Dreamers.

Regardless of your politics, a DACA solution is good for our economy. The conservative Cato Institute estimates that deporting the almost 800,000 recipients of DACA would cost more than \$60 billion and reduce economic growth by \$280 billion over 10 years. The liberal Center for American Progress advises that removing Iowa's DACA workers would lead to a loss of more than \$188 million to Iowa's GDP each year.

Even more important, as presidents of Christian colleges in Iowa, we believe in the importance of families as the foundations of our communities. DACA recipients and other Dreamers have put down roots and formed families. In our roles, we have had the privilege of learning many of their stories. Some are now parents of U.S.-born children. Some are married to U.S. citizens but unable to obtain citizenship for various reasons. Regardless of what one thinks of the legal foundation for DACA, it cannot be unwound without upending families and communities.

Beyond pragmatic arguments, though, our faith compels us to seek justice, love kindness, welcome the stranger and love our neighbors as ourselves (Micah 6:8, Leviticus 19:34 and Matthew 22:39). We believe that our faith and values must shape our politics, rather than vice versa. Inaction on difficult issues is neither fruitful nor faithful.

And this issue is not as intractable as it seems.

Since the Dream Act was introduced in 2001, there has been strong bipartisan support for it. Polls show high levels of support for its measures. Congressional inaction has not been because it has not known what to do; it's been because it has not had the political will to do it.

And so we call on Congress to act wisely and quickly. We urge Sen. Chuck Grassley as chair of the Judiciary Committee to work across the aisle to advance a permanent legislative solution that balances justice with mercy and the rule of law with protecting both families and the economy. We need Congress to protect our students, our graduates, their families, our churches, our communities, our state and our nation's investment in these smart, hard-working individuals. We hope they will make this exception to the partisan politics that have engulfed Washington because it's the right thing to do.

* Olivia and David are real students; their names have been changed to protect their privacy.