

Why a fix for DACA is imperative

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Over the last number of months there has been a deluge of interest in a small but important immigration program called DACA. DACA stands for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and is a policy that allows a number of individuals – approximately 800,000 across the country and thousands here in Michigan – who entered our country as minors to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation. I believe it is of the utmost importance that we work together to take care of these folks.

Let's be clear: For these young men and women, the United States is their home. They speak English, they've been raised in our neighborhoods, attended our schools, served in our military, worked in our communities, and have clean criminal records.

I've met with many individuals impacted by DACA and have heard from our Southwest Michigan universities, restaurant and small business owners, as well as my farmer friends, who all agree we must ensure a path forward. DACA recipients are important not only to our communities, but also our economy. Estimates from the CATO Institute show that a full repeal of DACA would cost the United States \$280 billion in economic growth during the next decade. Yes, I disagreed with President Barack Obama's 2012 executive order as it related to DACA, and welcomed President Trump's call on Congress to act with a legislative fix. That's exactly what we intend on doing. It is the responsibility of Congress to work together on fair, rigorous and bipartisan legislation that addresses the long-term uncertainty facing these young people. We need legislation – not executive orders. Congress has until March 2018 to come up with a solution, and I'm confident that we can.

To that end, I have co-sponsored two pieces of legislation to address this issue. The Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy Act (BRIDGE Act) seeks to grant a three-year protection for those who are covered by DACA. The Recognizing America's Children Act (RAC Act) would offer conditional five-year protection for DACA recipients if they pursue vocational or higher education, enlist in the military, or are gainfully employed. It also opens up a path to citizenship after 10 years if strict requirements are met. I am also a member of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, which is working to produce new legislation that combines protection for DACA recipients with border security measures to rally significant support among Republicans and Democrats.

This is clearly an important issue. Lives hang in the balance. These aspiring Americans deserve to be treated with compassion and fairness. These young men and women came to our country through no fault of their own. If they're working hard, playing by the rules, and reaching for the

American Dream – we should support them and encourage them. They are what helps make America great.