



Press release from Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce:

April 13, 2018

On Thursday, April 12, 2018, the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce united with 50 chambers from 23 states and signed an open letter that advocates bipartisan support for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and permanent protection for Dreamers. These protections are intended to allow young immigrants in our communities and across the country to continue to pursue their education, contribute to our labor force and tax base, and start new businesses.

“The thousands of Dreamers here in North Carolina have grown up in this country and are major contributors to our economic success,” said Corey Atkins, the Asheville Chamber’s Vice President of Public Policy. “Congress must act to allow these hard-working young people to remain in our communities.”

Atkins was one of 15 Chamber executives from across the country who convened at the Global Talent Network (GTN) conference in Salt Lake City, Utah last month hosted by New American Economy, a public policy organization that focuses on bipartisan immigration reform. The Asheville Chamber is one of the founding members of the GTN, which is a Chamber-specific division of New American Economy.

“With the goal of leveraging immigration as an economic growth strategy, we compared notes and examined programs that would most benefit our business community,” said Atkins. “It became clear that training and reinforcing labor needs would prove critical to our local and national economy. Supporting our immigrant population is an important piece of that effort.”

This is true especially in Asheville, Atkins notes. According to the 2018 Business Walk survey, 26 percent of local businesses stated need for a higher availability of qualified personnel. Workforce availability was reported as an issue particularly for companies of 10 or more employees, with training being the largest obstacle for manufacturing, construction, and accommodations. The loss of immigrants would deal a significant blow to the local workforce and economy.

Moreover, a 2014 study by New American Economy reported that North Carolina has the seventh-highest population of young, undocumented immigrants in the nation and is one of the top 10 states in the nation where undocumented immigrants contribute the most in state and local taxes. Our state has 47,956 immigrant entrepreneurs and immigrant spending power equates to \$17.1 billion. Without the contributions of those protected under DACA, North Carolina would

lose \$1.9 billion annually and in the next 10 years, our country's GDP would decrease by \$433 billion.

“We want to do the right thing for young people and the economy,” Atkins said. “Our hope is that a bipartisan solution will come out of Congress that allows Dreamers to stay, reforms our broken immigration system, and makes Asheville a more inviting and open community.”

Below is the full text of the open letter:

April 12, 2018

Dear Speaker Paul Ryan, Leader Nancy Pelosi, Leader Mitch McConnell, and Leader Charles E. Schumer,

As business leaders representing our nation's most important industries and regional economies, we are committed to promoting economic growth and job creation for all Americans. From manufacturing to agriculture, and from Main Street to Fortune 500 companies, the U.S. economy relies on our diverse, talented workforce to drive the country forward. That is why we are calling on Congress to pass bipartisan legislation to create permanent protections for Dreamers. These protections would allow young immigrants in our communities and across the country to continue to pursue their education, contribute to our labor force and tax base, and start new businesses that create jobs.

Nationwide, there are 1.3 million Dreamers — immigrants brought to the U.S. as children — who are eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that the Trump administration terminated last September. The vast majority of them have graduated high school, and more than 90 percent speak English well or better. According to New American Economy, they collectively earn \$19.9 billion in total income each year, and contribute more than \$3 billion to federal, state, and local taxes that keep our metros moving. There are over 900,000 DACA-eligible individuals in our states combined, contributing over \$1 billion in taxes each year. Which means that deporting them would not only be devastating to families, but also bad for our economy. Data from the Cato Institute estimated that deporting individuals with DACA status would cost the federal government over \$60 billion, with an additional \$280 billion in lost economic growth over the next decade. That is a scenario we simply cannot afford.

While federal court injunctions are keeping DACA on life support, the uncertainty around the program's future is preventing our immigrant youth from realizing their potential—as future doctors, teachers, engineers, or entrepreneurs—to everyone's detriment. There are several proposals to protect Dreamers in exchange for increased border security that have been introduced and have broad bipartisan support. A recent poll found that 80 percent of conservative and Republican voters—and 86 percent of President Trump's base voters—also support this type of legislative solution. Yet Congress has repeatedly failed to turn this consensus into action.

As chambers of commerce, we cannot allow politics to stand in the way of economic growth. That is why two weeks ago 15 of the nation's largest chambers of commerce convened in Salt Lake City to discuss the importance of immigration to our metro areas and build our agenda on this issue moving forward. But only Congress has the power to enact a real solution. We call on

you to pass a bipartisan deal on Dreamers now. Our industries need that deal—and it will also lay the groundwork for the type of broader, common-sense reforms to our immigration system that we need to compete globally. It's time for Congress to put politics aside and do the right thing for our young people and for our economy. Our businesses and our communities depend on it.

Sincerely,

Ambos Nogales Hispanic Chamber

Ames Chamber of Commerce

Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce

Asian Chamber of Commerce of Colorado

Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut

Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber

Colorado Asian Chamber of Commerce

Dallas Regional Chamber

Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce

Douglas Hispanic Chamber

Dubuque Area Chamber

East Tennessee Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce

Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Fresno Chamber of Commerce

Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce

Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce

Greater Dalton Chamber of Commerce

Greater Des Moines Partnership

Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce

Greater Louisville Inc.

Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce

Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce

Greater Yakima Chamber of Commerce
Irving Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Maine State Chamber of Commerce
Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce
Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
Miramar Pembroke Pines Regional Chamber of Commerce
Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce
Nashville Area Hispanic Chamber
Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Pembroke Park/West Park Chamber of Commerce
Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce
Quad Cities Chamber
Salt Lake Chamber
Sandy Area Chamber of Commerce
San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce
San Francisco Chamber of Commerce
Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce
Santa Fe Green Chamber of Commerce
Sierra Vista Hispanic Chamber
South Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce
Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce
St. Louis Regional Chamber of Commerce
Utah Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Tucson Hispanic Chamber
Weston Florida Chamber of Commerce