



Az business leaders say DACA repeal could have millions in economic impact

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One local business leader said that if authorities remove all of the state's DACA recipients from the economy, it would be the equivalent of removing the population of Kingman in northwest Arizona.

"These are people who are spending money, working and creating a positive economic impact," said James Garcia, a spokesman for the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Local business leaders continued to speak out after President Donald Trump on Tuesday announced his intention to repeal DACA, putting the future of nearly 800,000 DACA recipients in question. The program, established by former President Barack Obama, protects immigrants brought into the U.S. as children, from deportation.

In Arizona, this means uncertainty for 28,000 DACA recipients.

The Cato Institute predicted the repeal of DACA and the expense of immediate deportation would cost the federal government more than \$60 billion, and the resulting loss of economic growth in the next decade will amount to \$280 billion.

Nationally, businesses have spoken out or signed an open letter protesting the repeal and calling for Congress to pass the DREAM Act – Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors.

The Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Arizona Technology Council signed the letter.

About 91 percent of DACA recipients are employed, and 97 percent are employed or in school, according to the Center for American Progress. The Cato Institute found, on average, DACA recipients earn \$34,000 annually.

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Arizona Bankers Association CEO Paul Hickman said DACA recipients contribute widely to the economy and called their impact impressive. He said he considers the immigration policy a logical one.

"Pushing them into the underground economy is a bad idea," Hickman said.

Hickman said the repeal could potentially remove 800,000 people from contributing to the mainstream economy and prevent undocumented immigrants from joining it.

“A lot of these folks have good jobs, they’re educated or they are getting educated, and they’re working,” Hickman said. “They’re not a burden on the public-assistance program. They’re contributing back in taxes in terms of income and federal taxes.”

Hickman also expressed concern for the potential deportation of DACA recipients.

“That’s not a country we profess to live in, where we take a young person who is contributing and has no ties to a foreign country and send them back there,” he said. “That’s inhumane.”

Steve Zylstra said many technology companies, including Google and Apple, have taken a stand against the repeal. He said it’s something many Arizona tech companies care deeply about, and the policy committee for the Arizona Technology Council decided to take a stand.

While it’s unclear exactly how many DACA recipients work in tech, he said many immigrants are part of the industry. Zylstra, the group’s president and CEO, said history has shown immigrants to be innovative and hardworking.

The Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce sent a letter to the White House and signed the national letter. In its letter to the White House, the organization urged for DACA to remain intact unless replaced by the DREAM act.

In a letter, the chamber said, “Ultimately, our state and our country need Dreamers and other immigrants. We need them to grow our economy. We need them to further enrich our culture, just as all immigrants have over the course of U.S. history.”

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In Arizona, immigrants own 30 percent of the 123,000 Hispanic-owned businesses, Garcia said.

Garcia predicted the economy will lose millions of dollars by removing people from the workforce and reducing spending.

“It may not have as noticeable of an impact on a town or region, but it will have an impact economically,” Garcia said.