



## Dreamers are essential to Texas — it's time to let them stay

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Javier Quiroz Castro is a 29-year-old nurse at a Houston hospital who spends 12 to 14-hour shifts treating COVID-19 patients. Often he saves their lives with promising plasma transfusions. So far, every patient he's treated has either stabilized or returned home to their families.

But Javier is a Dreamer, which means he could soon lose his job and have his legal status ripped away. This month, the Supreme Court will likely allow President Trump to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which protects young undocumented immigrants from deportation. These 660,000 young people came to this country at no fault of their own and have worked hard to achieve their dreams. Like Javier, many are pulling America through the pandemic. It doesn't make sense to send them away.

I'm personally concerned about the moral and public health consequences of ending DACA, but as president of the Texas Business Leadership Council, I find the economic impact equally troubling.

Texas is home to the second-highest number of Dreamers in the country. They pay more than \$850 million in state and federal taxes, according to New American Economy, and start dozens of businesses every year, creating jobs for American workers. That's because our state has spent years investing in these smart and talented individuals. They've attended Texas schools, learned Texas state history, broken no laws, and have done all that we asked. Nationally, it's estimated that deporting DACA recipients would cost the federal government \$60 billion and reduce economic growth by \$280 billion over the next decade, according to the Cato Institute. Alternatively, giving Dreamers permanent legal status would help spur the kind of economic growth we want and need — and it will be especially crucial as we look toward economic recovery.

This is particularly true of our health care industry, which faced a critical labor shortage even before the pandemic. In 2015, Texas had 20 counties without a single physician, more counties than any other state in the nation, according to NAE. In 2018, there were nearly 21 open jobs in the state for every unemployed health care practitioner. To deport the half million Dreamers who

are currently considered essential workers, including 62,600 health care professionals, would be detrimental to our state and country.

The Texas Business Leadership Council understands this. We are doing all we can to help Dreamers stay and help us fully reopen the Texas economy. We've written to Congress; joined FWD.us in advocating for immigration reform, and Texans for Economic Growth, a coalition of 95 Texas business leaders who support the positive impact immigrants make; and publicly pushed for a path to citizenship for Dreamers. This isn't a partisan issue. The majority of Americans — nearly 90 percent in a 2018 CBS News poll — say Dreamers should be allowed to remain in the U.S.

Sending DACA recipients away not only impacts their futures, but their families and communities. Javier's parents became successful entrepreneurs after coming to the U.S., and today he's married to a U.S.-citizen with a new baby at home (roughly 200,000 American children have a Dreamer parent). Three generations would be impacted by Javier's absence — not to mention his patients and coworkers. DACA recipients should be allowed to stay in the only country most of them have ever known. Regardless of the Supreme Court decision, Congress can legislate permanent legal status for Dreamers. It's the right thing to do, but it's also necessary. The future of our economy, our state, and our nation is at stake.