



Boston Business Leaders Blast Trump's Decision To End DACA

Zeninjor Enwemeka

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Boston-area business leaders say they're disappointed with the Trump administration's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

The program, known as DACA, granted temporary legal status to about 800,000 people whose parents brought them to the country illegally as children — including about 8,000 here in Massachusetts.

Business leaders say ending the program is disruptive to businesses.

Tom Hopcroft, the head of the Massachusetts Technology Leadership Council, a business network of hundreds of local companies, called it a "blow to our economy."

"You just can't overstate the impact that immigrants and their children are having on our economy," Hopcroft said. "Any attempt to disrupt the flow of this talent, of these job creators, of these innovators into our country is going to put us at a significant disadvantage compared to other countries."

Tech companies are particularly concerned about being able to attract talent from around the world. They say ending DACA could discourage people from seeing the U.S. as a place for business opportunities.

"It just puts a chill on retaining and attracting the best workers in the world," said Steven Holtzman, the CEO of Boston-based biotech company Decibel Therapeutics.

Holtzman, along with another biotech CEO, published a letter Tuesday calling on the Trump administration to reconsider the decision to end DACA.

"Immigrants are important to our industry and have been in the whole formation of the biotech industry in the last 30 years," Holtzman said.

Carbonite CEO Mohamad Ali, who immigrated to the U.S. from Guyana as a child, said immigrants play an important role in filling tech jobs.

"There's a significant shortage of talent and that talent is somewhat addressed by retraining people here in the United States, but also utilizing the immigrant population," Ali said. "And that has always been true in America: this combination of immigrant talent and domestic talent to create one of the strongest workforces and the strongest economy."

The Cato Institute estimates that the economic cost of ending DACA would be \$924.5 million in Massachusetts between 2018 and 2028. The libertarian think tank also estimates the overall economic cost to the country would be over \$200 billion, and the cost to the government would

be \$60 billion. The left-leaning Center for American Progress estimates that ending DACA would result in a loss of over \$460 billion from the national GDP over the next 10 years.

Several business leaders also point out that many companies have been started by immigrants. More than 40 percent of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or their children, according to report by the New American Economy, a group of business leaders that advocates for immigration reform. Another report by the National Foundation for American Policy, a nonpartisan think tank, found that 51 percent of U.S. startups worth more than \$1 billion have at least one immigrant founder.

"This issue makes me wonder what happened to our country that we would take these steps with respect to a group of 800,000 people who are here, who are gainfully employed, who are going to school, who have been here since they were children, who do not represent any kind of threat or any kind of negative impact on the country," said Elyse Cherry, the CEO of Boston Community Capital. "Today it's the 'DREAMers,' the question is, who will it be tomorrow?"

Many in the business community now hope Congress will pass bipartisan legislation to give DACA recipients a pathway to citizenship.

Jim Rooney, the head of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, said Massachusetts will help lead efforts in Congress to address DACA and other immigration issues, such as the travel ban and restrictions on work visas.

"We'll certainly weigh in on Congress on doing the right thing here, and it certainly can't be to punish children," Rooney said.

As of Tuesday, the government is no longer accepting new DACA applications. Congress now has six months to pass bipartisan legislation to create a new version of the program.