



GUEST COLUMN: Repealing DACA program would be a costly tragedy

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Last week, President Donald Trump continued to play political football by suggesting he is not going to initially focus on overturning the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which protects undocumented people who came to the U.S. as children and gives them work permits. However, he did seem to keep the door open for ending the program down the road.

According to Trump's press secretary, Sean Spicer, "First and foremost, the president's been very, very clear that we need to direct agencies to focus on those who are in this country illegally and have a record - a criminal record or pose a threat to the American people. That's where the priorities are going to be and then we're going to continue to work through the entire number of folks that are here illegally."

I was born in Bolivia and raised in Los Angeles. Now through my work as an English language learner educator at a low-income high school in Colorado Springs, I work with students from all over the world. Many of these students are refugees, displaced by war and violence, who came here for a better life. Some are undocumented. All of them are grateful to be in this beautiful country, and they deserve the right to legally work and study here.

To all of them, I am a living, breathing example of the difficult-yet-hopeful struggle immigrants endure while living in the United States.

Former President Barack Obama's executive order that established DACA is the only reason I can legally work in this country, using my knowledge, experience and skills to contribute and participate.

Ending DACA without protections from deportation for recipients would be a tragedy for myself, my students and our Colorado community. It would also be costly. Per a new Cato Institute study, a repeal followed by deportation of all DACA recipients, who number about 740,000, would initially cost the country more than \$60 billion. This does not count the ensuing \$280 billion that would hit the American economy in the next decade.

Just this month, Congress reintroduced the Bridge Act; this bipartisan legislation would allow people who received a temporary work permit and deportation relief through DACA to continue living in the United States with permission from the federal government. The act issues "provisional protected presence" for a total period of three years.

It's heartening to see that members of Congress on both sides of the aisle recognize the positive impact that DACA has had on the lives of recipients. Repealing this program without replacing it with new legislation would subject Dreamers throughout Colorado and across the country to immediate deportation and force nearly 700,000 recipients to lose their jobs.

Please join me in calling on Congress to swiftly pass the Bridge Act and then get to work drafting comprehensive immigration reform that creates a more permanent legislative solution.