



## Expanding Opportunities for Dreamers Builds Success

*Congress should act today to establish a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers*



**January 19, 2019 Update:** *As the President and Members of Congress negotiate to fully reopen the Federal government, the future of young immigrants known as Dreamers has been injected into this debate. At FWD.us we believe these young individuals should be given the opportunity to earn citizenship in the United States, the only country many of them have ever known as home. As these negotiations proceed, our elected leaders should not lose sight that their actions and decisions will have a profound effect on the future of these young people and their families that are simply seeking an opportunity to continue contributing to their communities and country.*

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was established in 2012 to provide work authorization and temporary protection from deportation for “Dreamers,” undocumented immigrants who came to the United States at a young age. Under current law, most Dreamers have [no pathway to citizenship](#) or legal status. Then-Attorney General (AG) Jeff Sessions announced that the Trump Administration had decided to [end the program](#) in 2017 and blocked DACA-eligible Dreamers from filing new applications, although [multiple subsequent court injunctions](#) have allowed eligible current grantees to renew their DACA. There are currently [about 700,000 individuals](#) enrolled. In November of 2018, the Department of Justice (DOJ) [urged the Supreme Court](#) to bypass the ongoing legal process and issue a definitive ruling on DACA.

FWD.us supports a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers because it is critical to enabling these hard working young people to live their lives free from fear, as well as being good for all Americans, strengthening our national security, our economy, and communities across our country. While DACA does not provide full legal status - only protection from deportation and work authorization - its overwhelming success is undeniable proof of the benefits of expanding opportunity for Dreamers. Building on that success by expanding those opportunities and enshrining them in law would benefit all of us.

Yet despite DACA's success, Dreamers grapple every single day with uncertainty, forced to live their lives court case to court case, injunction to injunction, and in two-year increments. Instead of maximizing Dreamers' contributions, we are leaving their lives and their future success to chance. Congress should resolve this issue once and for all by providing Dreamers - including those not protected by DACA - with an opportunity to earn citizenship in the only country they have known as home.

### **Dreamers cannot afford for Congress to waste any more time**

While the Supreme Court [has wisely chosen not to yield to DOJ's request](#) to fast-track a DACA hearing, the lives of those individuals currently protected by the program, and millions more who were not able to register before it was terminated, are still crippled by uncertainty. If current DACA recipients are no longer allowed to renew their protections, more than [one thousand DACA holders will lose status every day](#), totaling over 460,000 individuals being ripped out of the workforce and under the threat of deportation this year.

Because the Trump Administration expanded [enforcement priorities](#) to *anyone* living in the country without legal status, those who lose their DACA protections will face the possibility of being deported to countries they barely remember. And even those fortunate enough to have secured DACA may [abstain from renewing out of fear](#) that their contact information will be used to facilitate their deportation if the Supreme Court allows the Trump administration to rescind the program fully.

### **Smart enforcement priorities promote safety and security**

DACA's rigorous security requirements and registration process allowed federal law enforcement to de-prioritize Dreamers confidently. The government knew precisely who they were, where they lived, and their background. In order to receive DACA, applicants had to [file a formal government request](#) which included biometric (fingerprints) and biographic (names, addresses, phone numbers) information, as well as a \$495 filing fee. In reviewing their filing, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) ran thorough background checks against a variety of lists, including FBI and national gang databases.

DACA was [originally implemented](#) to ensure that law enforcement focused limited resources on individuals with a violent criminal history or who represented national security concerns, not low-priority cases like Dreamers going to school and working. DACA recipients may be generally protected from the President's new enforcement measures; however, *all other undocumented immigrants* have been prioritized for removal. That means valuable enforcement dollars and resources are spent targeting long-standing hard working community members, including Dreamers who were unable to enroll in DACA before AG Sessions ended it, rather than focusing efforts on real threats.

A legislative pathway to citizenship like the Dream Act would extend these benefits even further by establishing a similar process for the full Dreamer population, and would ensure they were protected from future changes in prioritization.

### Dreamers work hard and make huge contributions

Work authorization allows Dreamers to provide for themselves and make investments in their future here. In fact, [96% of DACA recipients](#) are working or enrolled in school. Working legally allows them to help support their families and provides access to benefits like health insurance and long-term savings. Working also allows DACA holders to make long-term investments in their future and lay roots in this country - [62% of DACA recipients have purchased a vehicle](#), 14% have purchased a home, and 6% have started their own businesses.

In turn, Dreamers contribute significantly to the local and national economies — their paychecks [pump \\$42 billion in to GDP annually](#) and they pay over [\\$1.7 billion in state and local taxes](#). Enacting legislation for Dreamers to earn citizenship would maximize these economic contributions. Economists found that implementing DACA and allowing Dreamers to work increased GDP by \$3.5 billion - if the Dream Act were to be implemented, that increase to GDP would [grow to \\$15.2 billion](#). The Congressional Budget Office’s extremely conservative analysis of the Dream Act found that its passage would drive a [net federal revenue increase of \\$900 million](#).

**Table 1: U.S. Total of State and Local Tax Contributions of DACA-eligible individuals**  
*Current and potential contributions of individuals currently receiving or eligible for DACA status*

	Currently receiving DACA (852,000)	Currently eligible but not receiving (452,900)	Total DACA-eligible population (1.3 million)	Change from Current Contribution
<b>Current Taxes</b>	\$1,603,068,000	\$423,765,000	<b>\$2,026,833,000</b>	--
<b>Taxes if All Eligible Receiving</b>	\$1,603,068,000	\$849,546,000	<b>\$2,452,614,000</b>	+\$425,781,000
<b>If granted citizenship</b>	\$1,654,779,000	\$876,951,000	<b>\$2,531,730,000</b>	+\$504,897,000
<b>If DACA protections lost</b>	\$805,751,000	\$423,765,000	<b>\$1,229,516,000</b>	(\$797,317,000)

### Expanding opportunity opens the door to the American Dream

The opportunities provided by DACA - specifically, the ability to study, work legally, and live in their communities without the daily fear of deportation - have opened the door to the American Dream for so many, allowing Dreamers to thrive and succeed in incredible ways they would otherwise be denied. These protections and benefits have helped hundreds of thousands of Dreamers achieve self-sufficiency and integration into American society, two fundamental principles of our immigration system, and would be magnified exponentially if Dreamers were able to pursue full citizenship in the country they call home.

When Dreamers are given a fair chance to work and fully contribute to their communities, they thrive. Research from the Center for Migration Studies found that [91% of DACA recipients speak English well, very well, or exclusively](#), and 93% have at least a high school degree. Recipients credit DACA with helping them [get driver's licenses, enroll in higher education, and get better jobs](#) in every industry with higher pay. [25% of DACA holders have U.S. citizen children](#) born in America, further rooting their lives in this country. And [2 out of 3 Dreamers](#) say that receiving DACA made a direct impact on their feeling like they belonged in the U.S..

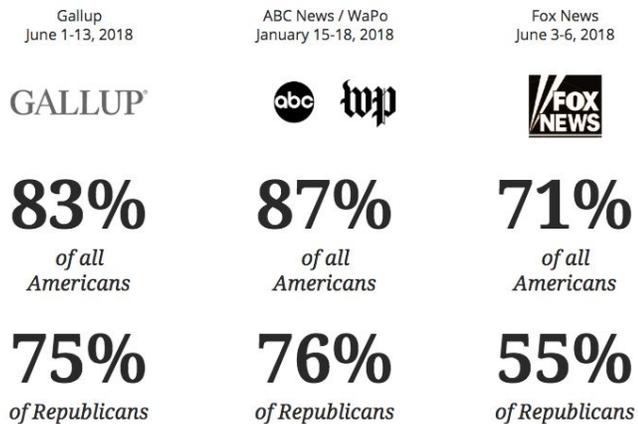
The protections and privileges of DACA have empowered them and hundreds of thousands more to embrace our nation's values and commit themselves to their American neighbors.

We have all seen countless stories of DACA recipients who [work in life-saving careers](#) and [volunteer their time and energy](#) in our communities, like those who [risked their lives to rescue survivors](#) during Hurricane Harvey, or the hundreds who have [enlisted in the armed forces](#) to defend our country in uniform.

### Americans believe Dreamers should stay

Poll after poll, story after story show that the American people believe Dreamers should stay in the country. Recent polls show that [83% of Americans support a pathway to citizenship](#) for Dreamers, including 75% of Republicans and right-leaning Independents. Last year over [115 industry leaders signed a letter](#) urging Congress to act to protect Dreamers. Elected officials on both sides of the aisle have endorsed these common-sense proposals in both chambers of Congress, and have roundly rejected proposals (emphatically boosted by the White House) to hold Dreamers hostage in exchange for massive cuts to legal immigration levels.

*The American public overwhelmingly supports giving Dreamers the chance to stay in the U.S.*



There are few - if any - issues of this significance that have this kind of broad bipartisan support. Providing a pathway for Dreamers and other temporarily protected individuals, like those with [Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\)](#), would match the will of the people and would be an important first step towards meaningful comprehensive reform. Dreamers are American in every way except on paper - it is far past time we give them the opportunity to secure their place in our country.