

Sam Dunkovich: Johnson must support America's Dreamers

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Last month, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the federal government will end the Obama administration's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy in March 2018. Established in 2012 by executive order, DACA deferred the deportation of 800,000 immigrants who were brought to the US as minors (known as "Dreamers") and met specific educational and career requirements. Now, the livelihoods of these hardworking immigrants are at stake. Sen. Ron Johnson should join many of his Republican colleagues in supporting a path to citizenship for the young adults known as Dreamers.

DACA was never a permanent solution to America's broken immigration system. In fact, it arose out of Congress' inability to pass comprehensive reform. For 16 years, Congress has repeatedly tried to pass the [DREAM Act](#), a bill that would have created a six-year waiting period before young undocumented immigrants could get permanent residency and then eventually citizenship.

As a response to Congress' failure, President Obama instituted the [DACA](#) program in 2012 as a temporary solution, allowing over 800,000 undocumented children brought here by their parents to be able to apply for permits that gave them work authorization and prevented them from being deported. To be eligible for DACA, the individual had to be brought here before the age of 16 and be enrolled in school, be a high school graduate, or be in the military. Applicants also had to be free of felony convictions.

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DACA was controversial because it was put into effect by executive fiat. As such, the [SUCCEED Act](#) (i.e. the Solution for Undocumented Children through Careers, Employment Education and Defending our Nation Act) could finally be the answer to a contentious, difficult issue. Introduced by Sens. Thom Tillis (R-NC), Jake Lankford (R-OK), Orrin Hatch (R-UT) on September 25, the bill would create a [five-step program](#) to move undocumented individuals into permanent resident status. Like DACA, SUCCEED has similar requirements regarding the age of the individual when they entered the US, the need to have an occupation or education, and a clean criminal record. Unlike DACA, the bill would grant green cards for permanent legal residences.

This immigration reform will let thousands of young people stay in the US — the country they grew up in and oftentimes the only one they know — and will benefit the economy. The [average DACA recipient](#) is employed and earns around \$17 an hour. The majority are students, 17 percent are even pursuing an advanced degree. In total, [91 percent](#) of DACA beneficiaries are currently employed. Many of them are even employed in Fortune 500 Companies. In fact, over [72 percent of these companies](#) have employed people under DACA. Overall, young DACA recipients are a net benefit to America, contributing to our economy and paying taxes.

Deporting them would prove costly, too. According to recent reports done by the [Center for American Progress](#), the loss of DACA workers would diminish US GDP by \$433 billion over the next decade. Moreover, mass deportation would cost American taxpayers over [\\$60 billion](#). In short, it would be both a fiscal and humanitarian disaster.

Fortunately, Americans recognize the importance of offering a path to citizenship for our nation's most promising immigrants. A Washington Post-ABC News poll found that [86 percent of Americans](#) support the right of DACA beneficiaries to stay in the U.S.. Sen. Ron Johnson should not let the American people down by putting the livelihoods of our most promising immigrants on the line. Passing the SUCCEED Act would continue the legacy of immigrants making America great.

— *Dunkovich is a Young Voices Alumni member and graduate from the University of Wisconsin Green Bay where he studied Political Science and Communications.*