

How DACA Can Be Improved

David Campos | April 2019

Background:

The number of undocumented immigrants flooding into the US, like many other industrialized countries, has become a persisting issue in terms of policy due to the fact that illegal children are being brought by their parents at a young age and living most of their lives in the country as undocumented (Schmid, 2013). It is estimated that there are approximately **11.7 million undocumented immigrants** currently living within US grounds, Hispanics comprising about 52% of that population (Cardenas, 2018). In addition, the US civilian workforce includes **7.8 million unauthorized immigrants** (Krogstad et al, 2018), demonstrating the substantial impact undocumented workers have on the US economy. In order to address the growing phenomenon of the illegal population, former US President Barack Obama created the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, also known as DACA, in 2012 to allow certain individuals with an unlawful presence in the US to be exempted from deportation and to be able to obtain renewable two-year work permits (“What Is DACA?”).

Applying For DACA:

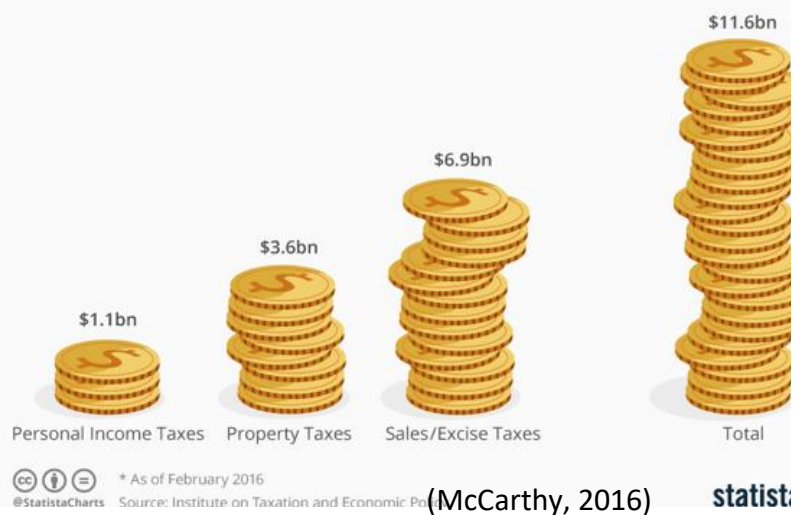
- ✓ Have arrived in the United States prior to age 16
- ✓ Be currently enrolled in school, have graduated or obtained a general development certificate (GED), or be an honorably discharged veteran
- ✓ Have not been convicted of a felony or multiple or serious misdemeanors, and not pose a threat to national security or public safety
- ✓ Be less than age 31 as of June 15, 2012 and at least age 15 at application time
- ✓ Were physically present in the US on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making your request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS
- ✓ Have continuously resided in the United States without legal status since June 15, 2007 up to the present (Svajlenka et al, 2013)

The Problem:

Although DACA has obtained a preconceived notion that it was the best form of policy to control the number of undocumented immigrants in the US, most of the programs' members remained at a disadvantage for the following reasons:

How Much Tax Do Undocumented Immigrants Pay?

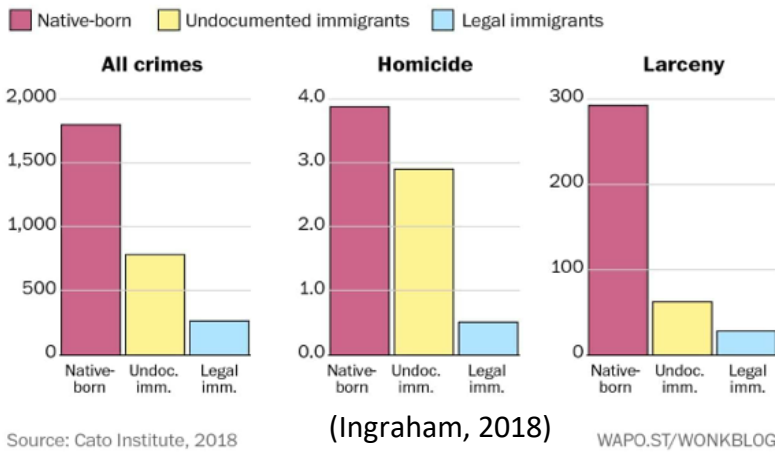
Undocumented immigrant's estimated annual contribution to U.S. state & local tax*



- DACA was a short-term, emergency, humanitarian program extended by President Obama to act on the lack of immigration reforms, failing to include any long-term resolutions for its members' citizenship statuses (Kennedy, 2017).
- In addition to 30% of all undocumented immigrants living below the poverty line, DACA members are ineligible for federal assistance programs such as food stamps, aid to attend college, and Medicaid (Juarez, 2017).
- Despite only sampling 368 college graduates, researchers have found that the gap between Hispanics and Whites attaining a college degree has greatly widened from 18% in 1990 to 26% in 2014 (Cadenas, 2018).

Undocumented immigrants commit less crime than native-born citizens

Criminal conviction rates in Texas, per 100,000 population, 2015



Why This Matters:

- Between 1990 and 2013, a period when the number of undocumented immigrants nearly tripled, the US rate of crime fell by 48% (Ewing, 2015).
- Approximately 800,000 undocumented entrepreneurs have created their own companies and generated \$17.2 billion in business income in 2014 (New American Economy, 2014).
- Repealing the temporary legal status and work authorization permitted by DACA would reduce estimated state and local revenues by nearly \$700 million. (Wiehe et al. 2018)

Immigrants Can Succeed:

Current President Donald Trump has emphasized the need to reduce the number of illegal immigrants in the United States, declaring in September 2017 that the DACA program will cease to exist. Since this announcement, President Trump has cooperated with lawmakers in attempting to create a sufficient solution for the thousands of people under DACA's protection (Schallhorn, 2018). Introduced by Senators Thomas Tillis of North Carolina, James Lankford of Oklahoma, and Orrin Hatch of Utah on September 25, 2017, the Solution for Undocumented Children through Careers, Employment, Education and Defending our Nation (SUCCEED Act) is a bill that aims to confront the mishaps present in DACA. Under the bill, applicants would have to meet the following requirements:

- Came to the US before the age of 16 and have continuously lived in the U.S since at least June 15, 2012
- Were younger than 31 years old and had no lawful status in the US on June 15, 2012
- Pass several governmental background checks, and demonstrate "good moral character" with no felonies, significant misdemeanors, or multiple convictions, register for the Selective Service and pay any applicable federal taxes
- Enroll in or attend a primary, secondary or postsecondary school if younger than 18
- Sign a conditional departure order notifying them that they relinquish nearly all forms of immigration relief if they violate the terms of their status (if they are 18 years or older (National Immigration Forum, 2017)

The SUCCEED Act is a fair and compassionate solution that requires individuals to demonstrate they are productive and law-abiding members of the communities. . . "-Senator Tillis

Pros and Cons of the SUCCEED Act

Pros:

- Allow up to 2.6 million Dreamers to earn legal status (National Immigration Forum, 2017)
- Provides Dreamers with the flexibility to extend their conditional permanent resident status by meeting a combination of military, higher education and worker requirements (National Immigration Forum, 2017)
- Extends conditional permanent resident status for an additional five years if an alien continues to show good moral character, has no tax liabilities, is not receiving federal benefits, and has graduated from a secondary or postsecondary school or has served in the military (115th Congress, 2017)
- Authorizes the Department of Homeland Security to can the removal of otherwise inadmissible or deplorable alier who entered the US as children and grant them conditional permanent resident status (115th Congress, 2017)

Cons:

- Aliens who violate the requirements of this bill or commit certain crimes are subject to expedited removal without immigration court hearing (115th Congress, 2017)
- Aliens with conditional or lawful permanent resident status under this bill may not sponsor family members to obtain legal status in the US (115th Congress, 2017)
- Longer process and more rigorous eligibility requirements than other legislation, especially when it comes to individuals with criminal backgrounds.

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