

businesses and hard-working families can thrive and prosper. That is what tax reform will do for farmers, for Iowans, and for all Americans. Whether they are middle-class farmers or middle-class nonfarmers, all will benefit from other provisions of the tax bill, such as doubling the standard deduction, doubling the child tax credit, reducing the 15-percent bracket to 12, reducing the 25-percent bracket to 22, and there are a lot of other features in this bill to benefit not only farmers but also other middle-class families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

#### DACA AND TPS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, the Dreamers are part of this country. They are America's future. They are helping to build this great Nation, and they need our attention now.

The Republicans control the House, the Senate, and the White House. One of their principal responsibilities is to pass a budget. We are now 4 months into the fiscal year and we don't have a budget and we are talking about another continuing resolution through mid-February.

A couple weeks ago, we were told on the floor to give it a couple more weeks and we would work some of these issues out, but that time has now come, and we still do not have a budget. We should not be going into February without dealing with the problems of this country. We need a deal on the budget. We need a deal for an agreement on the Dreamers. We have so many issues that need to be addressed. There is no excuse why the Republican leadership has not brought these issues to the floor of the Senate for action.

I want to start, in regard to the Dreamers, by commending the bipartisan work of a group convened by Senators GRAHAM and DURBIN. They have come up with a good plan that addresses key issues needed for a compromise on immigration reform. I was pleased to see they put on their website a summary of the proposed legislation that deals with the Dreamers. It deals with border security, deals with diversity visas, those who are in temporary protective status, and family reunification and migration.

The draft legislation we saw would provide a 12-year pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, with up to 2 years of credit for time with DACA. The qualified Dreamers must have entered the United States by June 15, 2012, when President Obama and the Department of Homeland Security announced the creation of the DACA Program. I think most of us know DACA stands for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program.

Let me just talk a few minutes about the Dreamers. These are individuals who entered our country as minors, when they were brought here by their

parents to seek a better life. Under the DACA Program, they were entitled to a 2-year renewable work permit and the ability to remain in this country without fear of deportation. Each one has to go through a criminal background check. They need to be enrolled in school. They must either be high school graduates or in the U.S. military.

In the United States today, we have 800,000 who are registered under the Dreamers. There are about 10,000 in my State of Maryland, and they are contributing half a billion dollars to Maryland's gross domestic product. They are a key part of our economy. They are the next generation of teachers, doctors, engineers, and entrepreneurs. They are going to help build America. Most know no other country but the United States, which is their home, and our values, which make America the great Nation it is.

We are a welcoming country. We are a country in which people have come over the years to build this great Nation. That is America's strength. Let us build on our strength, not run away from it. Are we going to turn our back now on the values that built this country? Are we going to rip families apart? Is that what America stands for? I find that hard to imagine.

At the same time, we would hurt our economy and hurt ourselves. I have met with many Dreamers in Maryland. We had one in my office a few weeks ago who had tears in her eyes. She said: I have an expiration date on my back. She doesn't know what is going to happen when that date occurs. To me—and I hope to all Americans—this country is not a country where someone should have to live under those fears. We need to take action to help the Dreamers.

I have had several roundtable discussions with Dreamers in Maryland. I had them in College Park, Baltimore, and other areas throughout Maryland. Let me just mention two Dreamers I met with. Adam was originally born in Canada. His family grew up in Pakistan. He came to the United States with his parents when he was very young. Becky—who was born in Peru—came here with her parents to the United States. I mention them collectively because they both attend the University of Maryland, College Park.

Our State allows Dreamers to have in-state tuition to go to college and get the tools they need in order to succeed. They need work permits because they have to work; otherwise, they never would have been able to get through school. They need a driver's license. Adam explained to me he needed a driver's license to get to a magnet school so he could advance his own education.

That was all possible—the ability to get a driver's license and the ability to work—because of President Obama's Executive order, the DACA Program. Now all of that has been put in doubt because of President Trump's an-

nouncement that the program will end. It puts their lives on hold in fear, and they wonder whether they need to go into the shadows of the United States of America.

This is a crisis which was created by President Trump when he announced the end of the DACA Program in 6 months. That will expire in March. President Trump's actions to rescind the DACA Program are wrong. We can correct it. That is what Congress can do and what we must do.

Our university community in Maryland strongly supports the DACA Program. I have heard from the University of Maryland system, Johns Hopkins University, and many other schools in our State. This fall, I received a joint letter from the public school secondary systems of Prince George's County, Anne Arundel County, Howard County, Montgomery County, and Baltimore City. This is what the school superintendents wrote to me:

Maryland is a national leader in providing students with a world-class education. Essential to our success is our commitment to providing children in our schools with a safe and welcoming environment to learn. Termination of DACA will have direct and damaging effects on the Maryland students who are current beneficiaries.

The schools' letter continues:

It is a direct threat to Maryland's economic stability and safety, as it will strip students of their ability to work and drive legally, pay taxes, and pursue post-secondary opportunities. Parents who lose work authorizations will face deportation or be moved into a dangerous underground economy, causing financial uncertainty for their families and harmful stress on their children—our students.

In addition, the DACA decision could impact our ability to motivate our youth to remain committed to their education and pursuing college or careers, and will lead to worsening economic hardships of our DACA community.

This is from our school systems in Maryland.

I heard similar concerns from law enforcement officials. Tom Manger, who cochairs the Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force and is the police chief in Montgomery County, wrote:

Our support for a legislative solution for Dreamers is consistent with our longstanding support for bipartisan reform of our immigration system. We support measures allowing law-abiding people to feel safe and secure in their communities, which reinforce trust and cooperation with state and local law enforcement. Beyond the significant contributions Dreamers make to our communities, we are concerned that, absent action by Congress, the Dreamer population will be driven back into the shadows and be hesitant to report crimes and cooperate with investigations. Such an outcome would risk undermining community safety. When Dreamers, and all immigrants, feel safe engaging with local police, all of our communities are safer.

I certainly agree with Chief Manger.

A group similar to the Dreamers are those who are here in temporary protected status, or TPS. There are 437,000 people in America from El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Somalia,

Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. In Maryland, 22,500 people are here from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti. The largest number is from El Salvador. Our TPS population in Maryland exceeds the DACA population. My own State's recipients contributed \$1.2 billion to the gross domestic product of my State, so this is a major part of the Maryland economy.

This is a very similar situation to the Dreamers. They get a 6- to 18-month extension. They have been here for decades because the underlying conditions in the countries from which they came still exist. I have been to Central America. I can tell you that it is not safe for people to return to those gang communities. They have the same situation—they know no other country but America. If they are required to go back to the country in which they were born, it will tear families apart. We need to act. We need to act in order to protect this group of citizens.

I want to acknowledge legislation that was introduced. I join my colleagues, Senators VAN HOLLEN, FEINSTEIN, and others, who will provide a legislative fix, S. 2144, the SECURE Act. I am pleased that the outline of the Durbin-Graham compromise immigration legislation includes relief for TPS recipients. The legislation will make changes to the diversity visa lottery program and reallocate half of the annual visas to recipients of TPS. That would amount to about 27,000 visas annually.

Under the draft, TPS recipients would maintain legal status and work authorization while awaiting visas. This would give TPS recipients protection from deportation, work authorizations, green cards, and ultimately a pathway to citizenship. After the TPS backlog is cleared—which could take roughly a decade to do, given the 300,000-plus recipients of TPS in the United States today—the annual visas would be allocated to nationals of priority countries.

In the past few months, the Department of Homeland Security has placed termination dates on TPS for those from El Salvador and Haiti and has extended the deadline for a decision on Honduras. These individuals are at risk. We need to act.

Maryland has a large number of El Salvadorans. I am gravely concerned about what will happen to these individuals—many mixed-nationality families who have been part of American communities for so long. For nearly a decade, El Salvador has consistently suffered per capita murder rates that have been among the worst in the world. In 2016, the people of El Salvador were victims of over 5,200 homicides—an alarming rate of more than 80 per 100,000 and the highest globally. El Salvador has limited capacity to absorb the nearly 200,000 individuals who could be subjected to immediate deportation. We welcomed these individuals to America to save them from danger.

As another example, although Haiti has made important strides toward re-

construction, its capacity to effectively manage repatriation efforts has faced substantial setbacks, including the continuing cholera epidemic and devastating hurricane in late 2016. Additionally, conditions in Haiti were further complicated by two category 5 hurricanes—Irma and Maria, which struck in September. These recent developments exacerbate already fragile conditions in Haiti.

As the Department of Homeland Security's own internal memorandum from April 2017 outlined, an estimated 30 percent of the population—approximately 3.2 million people—suffer from food insecurity, and 40 percent of the population lacks access to fundamental health and nutrition services.

In other words, it is not safe for those individuals to go back to Haiti. They have been here. This is their home. They want to make this their home, and we should give them that opportunity.

Let me conclude by again quoting Becky, one of the Dreamers I met at the University of Maryland, College Park. She said that the best present she ever got was on her 13th birthday when President Obama executed the Executive order that gave her legal status and hope here in America.

Well, we can give her an even better present right now. We can give her the present of Congress acting to provide protection for the Dreamers and for those on TPS so they don't have to worry again and they know they have a home here in America.

I urge my colleagues to pass legislation that will protect the Dreamers and TPS.

Mr. President, I certainly hope we will do the minimum that the Congress of the United States can get done, and that is to pass a budget before the deadline of tomorrow evening.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUNT). The Senator from Hawaii.

#### FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, Republicans control every level of the Federal Government. They hold majorities in the House and the Senate. They have the Presidency. Yet the very people—the Republicans—who set the agenda in Washington and have majorities in both the House and the Senate are desperately trying to convince the American people that a government shutdown should be blamed on anyone else but them. Give me a break.

Nobody wants a shutdown except, maybe, the President, who seems to relish a government shutdown as a way of “shaking things up,” regardless of who gets hurt. Members of Congress should know better, and Republicans should get down to business and negotiate with Democrats in good faith.

Republicans in the House and Senate have brought us to the brink of a shutdown because they are terrified of the ideological extremists in their own

party who reject even the most reasonable bipartisan compromises. They are terrified of a mercurial President, who changes his mind on a whim, who explodes at even the most minor slights, and who has repeatedly said that maybe we need a good government shutdown so he can get his vanity wall. Donald Trump and the Republicans will be held responsible for any government shutdown. They have created this situation, and the American people will hold them accountable.

Democrats have been open and transparent about the things we are fighting for. We are fighting to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program, CHIP, so 9 million kids across the country can continue to access the life-saving healthcare they need. We are fighting to restore funding to community health centers that serve millions of underserved Americans in rural communities, whether they live in Kansas, Ohio, or any of the other States Trump won. We are fighting to protect the Dreamers who could be deported to countries they know little of because the President unnecessarily and cruelly ended the DACA Program. We are also fighting for parity in funding for defense and domestic spending in any budget deal.

These are not partisan Democratic priorities. If one were to put each of these priorities up for a vote, they would all pass with bipartisan support in the House and the Senate. In fact, we could have passed each of these bills a long time ago. Yet, instead of doing something that would actually help people, the Republicans spent months working as hard as they could behind closed doors to give the wealthiest 1 percent of the people in our country and corporations huge tax cuts. Now they are trying to convince the other 99 percent of the American public that this tax bill was a good deal for them, but that is another story and is another example of misplaced priorities.

In getting back to the matter at hand, which is the urgency of preventing a government shutdown, the House is trying to pass another short-term spending bill that only includes a reauthorization for children's health and not the other important priorities we need to support. The Republicans in Congress are trying to pit communities, children, families, and Dreamers against one another in an attempt to divide and conquer. They are hoping we will support yet another government funding bill that kicks the can down the road because they will have funded children's health, even as, in their bill, they abandon the Dreamers and the rural communities that depend on community health centers.

We cannot allow this cynical Republican ploy to succeed. We need to keep fighting for children's health, for community health centers, for Dreamers, and for parity. I will not vote for any government funding bill that does not include all four of these important and urgent priorities. We cannot leave anyone behind because it is clear Donald