

stretched thin. So you should know this. Now, this administration is even making it worse.

Small businesses, retailers, construction companies, they are all losing their employees they depend on. How do I know? Because I hear from my small businesses in Nevada about this very issue.

Approximately 37,000 healthcare workers are DACA recipients. Now, if they can't go to their job, what do you think that does to our healthcare industry, which is already stretched because of the policies of this administration?

Hurting DACA recipients is hurting our country. It is more important than ever that we recognize the fact that, in light of the upcoming celebrations for America's 250th birthday, we have to recognize our contributions and our service to the members in our country who are a big part of it. Our 250th anniversary is a critical reminder that our great Nation only exists because of immigrants. We all have a story. We all have it—every single one of us. I do.

My grandfather came from Chihuahua, Mexico. He came into the United States, served in our military, and became a U.S. citizen. I have a great-grandfather who came to Ellis Island from Italy. He ended up in Kansas City, MO, of all places, raising his family, where my mother was born. We all have this story. That is what makes this country so great. That is why people come here.

And it should be that, yes, if you want to come to a country and you want to follow the rules—you want to follow the rules—you want to follow the law, work hard, you should be able to come here and get ahead. That is the country I know and love, and to lose sight of that is to spit on everything our country stands for.

The Declaration of Independence was written because immigrants and sons of immigrants, daughters of immigrants, grandsons, granddaughters of immigrants came together to escape tyranny and live their lives freely.

Every time I walk on the floor of the Senate, I think about my grandfather and my great-grandfather coming to this country. If they would have ever thought that one day they would have a granddaughter or a great-granddaughter that would walk on the floor of the U.S. Senate representing this country, it is beyond what they could have ever dreamed for. But they hoped. They had hoped for a life better for their children and grandchildren.

And DACA recipients are asking for the same freedoms and opportunities that our Founding Fathers envisioned for this country 250 years ago.

And I will say: It is time we stand with them. It is time we do right and we recognize the importance of those words in our Constitution, what our Founding Fathers stood for, how we stood on shoulders of others to get here. And those shoulders were immigrants.

We don't pull up the ladder behind us, but we make sure everybody has an opportunity to be a part of this beautiful country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

DACA

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am honored to join my colleagues this afternoon in celebrating the Deferred Action for Children Arrivals, or DACA, Program and its absolutely historic impact on our country, but also to mourn and to express outrage at the all-out assault launched against this program by the Trump administration.

The point of it, once again, seems to be cruelty—purposeful, relentless cruelty—which we have seen in the implementation of immigration practices in so many different ways by this administration.

Just this morning—literally, this morning—I participated in the announcement of a lawsuit against the government by a woman who was seized from her car taking her children to school, a year ago, leaving her children unattended in the car, shackled, sent to a detention center, and then summarily deported without even a shred of due process. And she is suing the U.S. Government because she is still in Mexico, separated from her two young children—at the time, 13 and 8 years old—as well as her husband.

She was on a screen today from Mexico—heartbreaking—as her two children listened to her in the Yale Law School conference room where the lawsuit was announced.

This kind of cruelty should have no place in our great country. I don't recognize the America that separates a mother from her children without any reason. She has no criminal record. She has been in this country for 15 years. Her two children are American citizens because they were born here. Cruelty and stupidity.

DACA, since its creation 14 years ago, has transformed the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people—people who came to this country as infants or young children—and it has given them the opportunity to work, to contribute; to educate, to support their families; to contribute to this great country. There are nurses, doctors, and engineers. They strengthen America. DACA has strengthened America.

In Connecticut alone, numerous DACA recipients actively contribute to our economy and enrich our communities. And yet despite the enormous, obvious, indisputable benefits of this program, the Trump administration has declared war on DACA.

Again, the point seems to be cruelty. The administration has slow-walked DACA renewals. They have purposely allowed Dreamers' work authorizations to expire through no fault of their own—cruelty and stupidity because they are harming the employers who

depend on those DACA workers and the skills that they bring to jobs every day.

The Department of Education has investigated five universities that offer financial help to DACA recipients. What purpose does it serve to punish universities for developing talent that will then serve our country?

In the latest affront to legal protections, the Board of Immigration Appeals has ruled that DACA status alone will not shield Dreamers from deportation, despite the fact that DACA is a mechanism of deferred action.

I mentioned the title in the first sentence of my remarks here—Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program—because the point is action is deferred. And now the administration is defying the law and common sense in this policy of stupidity and cruelty.

As a result of these illegal policy changes, DACA recipients have not only lost their sense of safety and security but, in some cases, their freedom—and their place in this country. It is the only place they call home. English is the only language many of them speak. And we are depriving them of that sense of home and security and safety.

I will just give you one example: Jose, of Connecticut. He is a DACA recipient. He came to Connecticut from Mexico when he was young. Thanks to DACA, he was able to put himself through college while working full time, and he built a successful career at a Fortune 500 company. He has worked there for 12 years. And now, because of the Trump administration's efforts to delay renewal requests at USCIS, Jose's DACA status and his work permit have not been renewed. No fault of his own. Jose lost the job. He lost that job that he held for 12 years, and today he is struggling to pay his bills. He faces eviction.

What purpose does it serve to drive him into financial peril and even bankruptcy, to deprive his employer of his skills, to, in effect, make him homeless?

President Trump's treatment of DACA recipients is the latest failure of his promise that his immigration efforts would focus on the worst of the worst.

Americans like the idea of deporting dangerous criminals, people who have been convicted of crimes—not Nancy Martinez, who was separated from her children as she took them to work in her car, having committed no crime; not Jose, who is the opposite of the worst of the worst, a productive member of our society, doing good work at a good corporation over 12 years.

These DACA recipients like Jose are far from the worst of the worst. They are our neighbors, coworkers, classmates, and friends. They are some of the best—not the worst—of us.

We are not talking here about securing our borders. We are not talking about deporting dangerous criminals. We are talking about rolling back and

reversing progress that has been made on behalf of young people who are here through no choice of their own; they were brought here, and they call America home because it is their home.

I call on the Trump administration to resume prompt review of renewal applications and halt unlawful detention and deportation of DACA recipients. I am under no illusions that my calling on it to do so is going to automatically have an effect on this cruel and stupid set of policies and practices, but I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will heed this peril, this danger to America, and that they will come together with us and say on a bipartisan basis: An assault on DACA makes no sense for America. It is not the America that we recognize.

And as we approach our 250th anniversary, we have an opportunity to reflect on who we are and, equally important, whom we aspire to be. Whom do we want to be? That has always been America. It isn't only about what America has done or who we are today. America is an idea, an aspiration, and a future.

DACA recipients embody the values that we celebrate as America: hard work, resilience, a commitment to our country and to building a better America. Let's provide Dreamers with the respect and dignity and future they have earned.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

DACA

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I am honored to join my colleagues here today, and I appreciate Senator DURBIN's leadership in bringing us all together because today is truly an important day for hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children across America.

It was 14 years ago today that President Obama took action to memorialize an important truth: that young people who were brought to the United States as young children through no choice of their own—who have grown up in our communities, who have attended our local schools, many graduating at the top of their class from high school as valedictorians and who know no other home but the United States—that they deserve an opportunity to continue to be part of this country, free of the fear of being deported for a decision they had no say in.

Fourteen years ago, the U.S. Government made that promise: that if they came forward, passed a background check, and followed the rules, did everything that we asked of them, that they could stay here and pursue their dreams in the only country that they have ever known. And hundreds of thousands of brave young people did exactly that.

Now, to be clear, DACA was never intended to be a permanent solution. It

was meant to be a temporary stopgap until Congress took action by passing the Dream Act or, ideally, modernizing our immigration system as a whole. Yet here we are, 14 years later, still having the same debate about these young people and their future because while the hundreds of thousands of DACA recipients kept their promise—they did their part—Congress has repeatedly failed to do ours. And now these individuals, who were young children back then when this program began, are now adults with careers and families of their own. They are even more deeply ingrained in our communities and our country than they were 14 years ago.

There are over 530,000 people enrolled in DACA today—somewhere between 140,000 or 150,000 of them in my home State of California alone. Listen to this. The average DACA recipient is 33 years old now. The average DACA recipient has lived in the United States for 27 years. They are not recent arrivals. They are our friends and neighbors, our family members, our loved ones. They have grown up to be teachers and nurses, caregivers, lawyers, small business owners.

We would call them model citizens if we would allow them to become citizens, but they are model, nonetheless. Eighty-seven percent of them are gainfully employed. Collectively, they contribute \$17 billion to the American economy. That ought to be celebrated, not shunned for political purposes. About 1 in 3 are married, and roughly 240,000 U.S. citizen children live with at least 1 parent who is a DACA recipient.

They are among the people being targeted now by an administration claiming to be only going after the worst of the worst. Not only are they being swept up in the administration's mass deportation campaign, but many are now facing extraordinary, monthslong delays when trying to renew their DACA and work authorization—delays that are having real impacts, with real consequences, as this administration seemingly tries to undermine this program.

And on this anniversary of the DACA Program, I want to share a couple of stories of DACA recipients in my home State. Twenty-five-year-old Maria Fernanda Hernandez has been a DACA recipient since she was 15 years old. Thanks to DACA, Maria was able to attend college, earn a bachelor's degree in psychology, and find a full-time job as a project manager at a market research company. But Maria recently had to take a leave from her job, as many others, because even though she submitted her application on time back in January, it still hasn't even been reviewed by USCIS nearly 6 months later. In the months she has been forced to wait, Maria's DACA and the work permit that went along with it expired.

If that wasn't bad enough, her father has been battling a number of health issues over the last year. He spent

months in the hospital and, at one point, had to have his legs amputated. I mention this because Maria was doing as much as she possibly could to help support her parents financially during all of this. But now, with her renewal stuck in limbo, Maria can no longer work or help her parents at a time when they need her the most.

Teresa is another DACA recipient who came to this country as a very young child. Teresa worked hard, got a good education, and built an impressive career not just as a nurse but as an award-winning nurse at one of Los Angeles County's largest hospitals. And like Maria and so many others, Teresa filed her renewal application on time. Yet months later, despite repeated outreach to USCIS, she still hasn't received any updates. And because of those delays, Teresa's work authorization has expired, and she is facing the possibility of losing the career she worked so hard to build because she is not able to provide her employer the necessary documents to keep working. That is what these cruel delays have caused.

Jose Morales Perez is 32 years old. He has lived in Los Angeles most of his life, ever since coming from Tijuana as a young child. He attended local schools, eventually graduating from Garfield High School in East Los Angeles and later attending Glendale Community College. Jose has built a life here. He has worked a steady job. He started a family. He helps care for his mother, whose diabetes complications have left her unable to walk.

Jose was up for a promotion at work earlier this year, and instead of celebrating that promotion, he lost his job when his DACA expired while waiting for the administration to process his renewal application.

And now his family is struggling to make ends meet, to the point where they are now pawning family heirlooms just for a little bit more cash to continue to scrape by.

Maria, Teresa, Jose—these and thousands of others just like them are the people that we are talking about when we discuss and debate DACA, people who followed the rules and did everything that we asked of them. The only choice that they ever made was to trust the U.S. Government when the government made them the promise that, if they came forward, they would not be punished for doing the right thing. That promise is being broken today by the Trump administration.

These men and women that I am talking about—not just the three that I mentioned—all of them deserve better. They deserve certainty. They and all Dreamers like them deserve the opportunity to continue contributing to their communities and to our country. They deserve the chance to become full-fledged members of this country—their country, our country—the only country that they have ever known, that they have given so much of their talent and so much of their leadership to each and every day.