

Silicon Valley denounces betrayal of 'Dreamers' (Update)

September 5 2017



Immigrants and supporters demonstrate during a rally in support of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in front of the White House after the Trump administration indicated it would phase out the amnesty program

Silicon Valley titans including Apple, Facebook and Google on Tuesday condemned the dismantling of an amnesty program for young immigrants after President Donald Trump announced a phase-out of the "Dreamers" policy.

The reaction came swiftly after Trump announced a termination of the program protecting 800,000 people brought to the United States as minors from deportation.

"This is a sad day for our country," Facebook co-founder and chief Mark Zuckerberg said in a post at the leading online social network, reacting to the decision on the program known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA.

"The decision to end DACA is not just wrong. It is particularly cruel to offer young people the American Dream, encourage them to come out of the shadows and trust our government, and then punish them for it."

Top executives from a growing list of technology firms called young people shielded by DACA friends and neighbors who have contributed to local communities and economies.

"I am deeply dismayed that 800,000 Americans - including more than 250 of our Apple coworkers - may soon find themselves cast out of the only country they've ever called home," Apple chief executive Tim Cook said in an email to employees obtained by AFP.

"They are called Dreamers, and regardless of where they were born, they deserve our respect as equals."

Fighting for Dreamers

Dreamers working at Apple include those born in Canada, Mexico, Kenya and Mongolia, with the US being the only home they have ever known, Cook said in the message.

He vowed that Apple would press Congress to come up with legislation protecting Dreamers, and provide employees protected by DACA with

support including advice from immigration experts.

Microsoft meanwhile said it will work with other companies to "vigorously defend" the legal rights of all Dreamers.

If the US government tries to deport any of the 39 Dreamers working at Microsoft, the technology giant will provide them legal counsel along with seeking to directly intervene in court, Microsoft president and chief legal officer Brad Smith said in a blog post.

"We are deeply disappointed by the administration's decision today," Smith said.



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg was among technology leaders swiftly condemning the Trump administration's decision to end a program protecting "Dreamers," those who immigrated to the United States illegally as children

"We believe this is a big step back for our entire country."

Dreams before taxes

Microsoft, Google and others called on Congress to make a priority of legislation protecting Dreamers.

"Dreamers are our neighbors, our friends and our co-workers," Google chief executive Sundar Pichai said in a tweet.

"This is their home. Congress needs to act now."

Legislation protecting Dreamers should be a priority ahead of even tax reform, which has been long sought by major US technology companies, Microsoft's Smith said.

Business Roundtable, a group of chiefs of major US firms, put out a statement opposing the elimination of DACA before a viable replacement is created.

Roundtable president Joshua Bolten said in a statement: "Failure to act would have a significant negative impact on businesses that rely on employees who are here and working lawfully."

The Trump administration said it was now up to Congress to draft new legislation to address the situation.

If lawmakers fail to agree on new legislation, those impacted would find themselves in the country illegally when their current permits expire.

Former president Barack Obama implemented the DACA program five years ago to help bring the children of undocumented immigrants out of the shadows of illegality, permitting them to study and work without

fear.

DACA was based on sound public policy; wasn't challenged in court, and resulted in "individuals of good faith" becoming ingrained US communities and the economy, according to US Chamber of Commerce senior vice president Neil Bradley.

"To reverse course now and deport these individuals is contrary to fundamental American principles and the best interests of our country," Bradley said in a release calling for the Trump administration and Congress to implement a solution before the program expires.

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