Apple CEO Tim Cook explains why he spoke out about immigration

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Apple CEO Tim Cook elaborated on earlier remarks critical of the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" immigration policy, noting many Apple employees likely went through a similar situation experienced by families trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border.

"We have a lot of immigrants that work at Apple," Cook said at the Fortune CEO Initiative in San Francisco Monday. More than 300 are part of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), he said. "I want to stand up for them."

Last week, on a trip to Ireland, Cook told the Irish Times that the separation of children from their families at the U.S./Mexico border was "inhumane" and that Apple would be working with the government to be a "constructive voice" on the issue.

He was among a handful of tech executives voicing concerns about the Trump administration policy that's separated over 2,000 children from parents or guardians detained for crossing the border illegally. The response from the broader business community has been largely channeled through trade groups as company executives attempt to navigate a highly charged political climate.

Speaking to the conference of business executives, which was live-streamed, Cook said CEOs should speak out when they see something that isn't consistent with their company's values. "Think about if you don't, then you're in the 'appalling silence of the good people' category,"

he said. "This is something I've never wanted to be a part of."

"Ultimately that is what human rights is all about," he said. "It's about treating people with dignity and respect, at the end of the day."

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