

July 29, 2013

Dear Member of Congress;

We, the undersigned organizations, write to you as members of the DREAM Policy Table (DPT) to urge you to support immigration reform that includes an inclusive roadmap to citizenship for immigrant youth, their families, and all of the 11 million aspiring citizens. The DPT is comprised of over 100 youth-led, education, labor, faith-based, civil rights, immigrant rights, and child advocacy organizations that have historically supported passage of the DREAM Act. The undersigned organizations are now united in support of immigration reform that protects and promotes the interests of DREAMers, their families, and their communities.

Although we are encouraged by the increased show of bipartisan support in the House to provide relief to those DREAMers who entered the U.S. as children, we are disappointed that such bipartisanship has not been extended to craft a real solution that addresses the holistic needs of immigrant children. We support a strong and inclusive DREAM Act that provides a clear and expedient roadmap to citizenship for all DREAMers, regardless of their current age, as well as access to financial aid and a streamlined process for those who have benefited from the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. However, we also firmly believe that the DREAM Act alone is insufficient to fully meet the needs of DREAMers and the 4.5 million children who live in mixed-legal status families. In order to truly improve the lives of these children, we need a comprehensive fix to our immigration system that provides a roadmap to citizenship for DREAMers, their families, and their communities.

In order for immigration reform to be successful, it must protect the basic rights of children and youth, keep families together, and allow immigrant parents to adequately provide for their families. We strongly oppose any proposal that would create barriers to citizenship, further expand interior enforcement programs, or restrict the use of prosecutorial discretion to protect child well-being and family unity. Record-high deportations have resulted in roughly 205,000 parents of U.S. citizen children being removed between 2010 and 2012. Research has consistently demonstrated that separation from a parent due to immigration enforcement has devastating short-term and long-term outcomes for children, including adverse impacts to their mental and physical health, academic performance, and economic security. Research has consistently shown that ensuring the health and academic success of society's youngest members has significant long-term economic pay-offs. Furthermore, allowing immigrants to contribute to our economy lawfully will expand our country's economic growth and promote our national fiscal stability.

Our coalition is also deeply concerned about the devastating consequences that would inevitably follow from passage of the SAFE Act. That bill would dramatically increase the incidence of family separation, promote racial profiling and undermine effective law enforcement by harming community trust of local institutions. By granting states and localities the power to be fully involved in the enforcement of immigration violations and allowing states to craft civil and criminal consequences for such violations, the SAFE Act would replicate the effects of Arizona's infamous S.B. 1070. That law exacerbated mistrust of public institutions, making youth in particular less likely to trust not only law enforcement but also other public institutions, such as

schools. As a result, many students who had previously been academically successful and contributing to their communities became withdrawn and less likely to attend school, be involved in extracurricular activities, achieve academically, and contribute to their communities.

Moreover, the SAFE Act provides that youth could be incarcerated or deported if they are merely suspected of being members of a gang, even if they do not have a criminal conviction. It also requires the automatic deportation of DREAMers who are lawfully present in the US, including young people who have only committed minor offenses or whose criminal convictions have been found to be constitutionally invalid. Provisions that over-penalize youth by banishing them from the only country they call home due to minor mistakes are especially concerning for low-income youth and young people of color, who are already more likely to face criminal consequences for minor conduct problems. Thus, we strongly encourage you to stand with immigrant children and youth in opposing the SAFE Act.

As a diverse coalition dedicated to improving outcomes for immigrant children and their families, we urge you to support immigration reform that upholds our American values of putting children first and strengthening families.

Sincerely,

Members of the DREAM Policy Table (organizations listed below):

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
American Federation of Teachers
America's Voice
Alliance for a Just Society
American Civil Liberties Union
Americans for Immigrant Justice
Arizona DREAM Act Coalition
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - (AAJC)
Border Action Network
Campaign for Community Change (CCC)
Casa Latina
Causa of Oregon
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
Entre Hermanos
First Focus
Hispanic Federation
Idaho Community Action Network
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Defense Project
Immigrant Justice Network
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Immigration Equality Action Fund
Latino Education & Training Institute

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON)
National Employment Law Project
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Immigration Law Center
National Immigrant Justice Center
New York Immigration Coalition
OneAmerica
SEIU Healthcare 775NW
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Skagit Immigrant Rights Council
Stop the Checkpoints
Tacoma Community House
United We Dream (UWD)
Washington Community Action Network
Washington Defender Association's Immigration Project
Women's Refugee Commission