

To: Members of Congress

Re: A Pathway to Citizenship Is the Bulwark Against ICE Abuses

Dear Members of Congress,

We, the 164 undersigned civil, human, and immigrant rights organizations collectively representing millions of immigrant communities across the United States, urge Congress to firmly reject costly and dangerous mass deportation and detention policies and instead lead with an affirmative policy agenda whose north star is enacting a pathway to citizenship for all immigrants in the U.S.

While Congress continues to deliberate over tactics to restrain some of the harms communities face due to ICE's enforcement practices, an agenda for an affirmative vision calls for bold, permanent protections that are immune to the policy whiplash we have witnessed across different administrations. Creating an opportunity for immigrants to come forward, pass a background check, and apply for lawful permanent residency, ultimately becoming naturalized citizens, is the solution policymakers should focus on.

Congress has spent decades debating but failing to enact a major new pathway to citizenship, making the status quo an ever-increasing enforcement-only approach now [vehemently opposed](#) by the American public. As this administration carries out the most harrowing and cruel aspects of its mass deportation and detention campaign, strong public support grows for a pathway to citizenship. According to a February 2026 poll, [72% of voters](#) support a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. The status quo is [costing](#) taxpayers tens of billions of dollars, while [research shows](#) that a pathway to citizenship would grow our national GDP by more than a trillion dollars.

As of 2023, [nearly half](#) of the undocumented population has resided in the U.S. for over 20 years. In that time, they have raised U.S. citizen children, created businesses, paid taxes, and continue to be an essential part of the labor force. Undocumented farm workers, for example, have spent an average of [8 years](#) doing back-breaking work to keep U.S.-grown food in our grocery stores. [Over 1 million](#) Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders have had legal protection for years - some even for decades - and have become fundamental contributors to key sectors, including construction, home healthcare, and hospitality. Unfortunately, the Trump administration has attempted to end TPS for millions, who now face deportation and detention. Dreamers and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients have come of age in the U.S. A [2024 survey](#) of DACA recipients found that the average age of arrival was at 6 years old, and they have spent an average of over 25 years residing in the U.S.

The reality is that undocumented immigrants have long contributed to their communities. The current mass deportation and detention policies are tearing the fabric of this nation to shreds, ripping teachers out of classrooms, disappearing servicemembers' spouses, separating families, raiding church pews, and shuttering small businesses.

Citizenship provides more security than a permanent second-class status, which can be revoked, lost, or seemingly disregarded, as observed under this administration. It ensures the enduring right to reside in the United States, facilitates economic mobility, participation in democratic processes, keeps families together, and acknowledges their longstanding contributions to this nation. Additionally, [4%](#) of members of Congress are naturalized citizens.

We are concerned about recent legislative proposals that limit citizenship to narrow groups within the undocumented population or create new temporary legal statuses, which are not permanent, and do not allow for a pathway to citizenship. These measures risk establishing a permanent second-class status and may encourage anti-immigrant actors to use government agencies and courts to revoke their status. For example, Texas has led litigation to remove DACA recipients' work authorization and protection from deportation, and both the Biden and Trump administrations have terminated TPS. Additionally, a [survey from the National Employment Law Project](#) found that temporary workers at large corporations such as Amazon, Walmart, and Tyson Foods report lower wages, wage theft, workplace injuries, and employer retaliation due to their temporary status.

Legislation that creates a second class of immigrant status would result in immigrants paying taxes and contributing to public social programs without allowing them to benefit from these services. Proposed rules, such as public charge, which deters low-income immigrant families from seeking essential health, nutrition, and economic support, and the HUD rule denying mixed-status families access to federally subsidized housing, further restrict access to critical resources. Additionally, the Trump administration recently revoked DACA recipients' access to the Affordable Care Act. These policy changes increase the risk of poverty, poor health, and economic insecurity for immigrant families. Communities are stronger when everyone can access the resources they need to succeed.

Establishing a new temporary status category of immigrants lacking the rights and responsibilities of permanent residents or citizenship would only further complicate our broken immigration system and create new incentives to exploit and jeopardize the tenuous status of immigrants who come forward and put their faith in the U.S. government.

The American people are hungry for bold leadership. Now is the time to fight for your neighbors and their full humanity. We urge you to think beyond the confines of today's cynical political reality and to reimagine a stable immigration system that guarantees rights and protections, strengthens our shared economic and civic life, lifts wages, counters corporate exploitation, and builds durable political power. **Citizenship is the gold standard of protection for those who already call America home. Together, we can achieve our north star and build a vibrant and diverse economy that works for all, not just for the billionaires and those cruelly profiting from the pain and suffering of immigrants. We urge Congress to uphold its values of fairness and inclusion, and to reaffirm that all immigrants are welcome and deserve citizenship.**

In solidarity,

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)

United We Dream (UWD)

We Are CASA

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

National Immigration Law Center (NILC)

National Organizations

- African Communities Together (ACT)
- Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
- American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
- American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
- Amica Center for Immigrant Rights
- Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC)
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
- Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP)
- Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
- Beyond Pesticides
- Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
- Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc. (CDM)
- Church World Service
- Coalition on Human Needs
- Community Change Action
- Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)
- Drug Policy Alliance
- Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)
- Franciscan Action Network
- Friends Committee on National Legislation
- Global Exchange
- Grassroots Leadership
- Haitian Bridge Alliance
- Human Rights First
- Immigrants Rising
- Immigration Equality
- Immigration Law & Justice Network
- Institute for Policy Studies, National Priorities Project
- International Refugee Assistance Project
- Ipas
- Jewish Council for Public Affairs
- Just Detention International
- Justice in Motion
- Justice for Migrant Women
- Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)
- Local Progress
- Make the Road States
- Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

- MoveOn
- Muslim Advocates
- Muslims for Just Futures
- NAKASEC
- National Council of Jewish Women
- National Education Association
- National Immigration Project
- National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA)
- NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
- Organized Power in Numbers (OPIN)
- Pesticide Action and Agroecology Network
- Poder Latinx
- Public Citizen
- Public Counsel
- Reconstructing Judaism
- Refugees International
- Rural Coalition
- Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
- Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Justice Team
- Sojourners
- Stop AAPI Hate
- T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
- The United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society
- The Workers Circle
- UndocuBlack Network
- Union for Reform Judaism
- Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
- Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
- United Church of Christ
- United Parent Leaders Action Network
- USAHello
- Venezuelan American Caucus
- Voto Latino
- Welcoming America

State Organizations

Alabama

- Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice

Arizona

- Borderlands Resource Initiative
- CSF (Somerton)
- Promise Arizona (PAZ)

California

- Ahri Center
- Amigos de Guadalupe Center for Justice and Empowerment
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California (AJSOCAL)

- Bend the Arc California
- Campesinos Unidos de California
- Chinese for Affirmative Action
- CSA San Diego County
- Empowering Marginalized Asian Communities (EMAC)
- Equality California
- Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef)
- Northern California Coalition For Just Immigration Reform (NCCJIR)
- Parent Voices, California
- Refugee & Immigrant Transitions
- Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN)
- Sisters Of St. Joseph Of Orange Justice Center
- St. Joseph Justice Center
- The Children's Partnership
- United Teachers Los Angeles

Colorado

- Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition

Connecticut

- Elena's Light

Florida

- Farmworker Association of Florida
- Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC)
- People Power United

Hawai'i

- The Legal Clinic - Hawai'i

Illinois

- Chicago Women Take Action
- Courts Matter Illinois
- Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)
- National Immigrant Justice Center
- The Resurrection Project

Louisiana

- EXCELL Coalition
- Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants

Maine

- Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP)
- Maine People's Alliance

Massachusetts

- Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)

Minnesota

- Unidos MN

Nebraska

- Nebraska Appleseed

Nevada

- Make the Road Nevada
- Nevada Immigrant Coalition
- Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
- Silver State Equality

New Jersey

- New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice

New Mexico

- Equality New Mexico
- La Plaza de Encuentro Gathering Place
- New Mexico Asian Family Center
- New Mexico Dream Team
- ProgressNow New Mexico

New York

- Adelante Student Voices
- Black Communities for Immigrant Justice
- Immigration Law & Justice New York
- Make the Road NY
- Worker Justice Center of New York

North Carolina

- National Farm Worker Ministry

Ohio

- 4winds419
- Miami Valley Immigration Coalition
- Motivation Motavates
- Ohio Immigrant Alliance
- OPAWL - Building AAPI Feminist Leadership
- InterReligious Task Force on Central America

Oregon

- Oregon For All
- Pineros Y Campesinos Unidos Del Noroeste (PCUN)

Pennsylvania

- Pennsylvania Immigration Coalition
- VietLead

South Carolina

- Carolina Abortion Fund

Texas

- Border Network for Human Rights
- Children's Defense Fund-Texas
- Every Texan
- La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)
- Planned Parenthood Texas Votes
- Workers Defense Action Fund

Vermont

- Migrant Justice

Virginia

- Just Neighbors

Washington, DC

- Congregation Action Network
- JAMAAT - Jews and Muslims and Allies Acting Together

West Virginia

- Mountain State Justice, Inc.