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Statement of the National Immigration Law Center

House Judiciary Committee

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING:

“Protecting Dreamers and TPS Recipients”

March 6, 2019 at 10:00AM

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

The National Immigration Law Center (NILC) writes to express our deep gratitude to the Chair of the House Judiciary Committee for bringing these important issues before the committee. Established in 1979, NILC is an organization long dedicated to protecting and advancing the rights and opportunities of low-income immigrants and their families. We believe that all people should have the opportunity to achieve their full human potential – regardless of their race, gender, immigration, and/or economic status. Over the past forty years, NILC has won landmark legal decisions protecting fundamental human and civil rights and advocated for policies that reinforce our nation’s values of equality and justice for all. One such case is *Batalla Vidal, et al. v. Nielsen, et al.*, where we challenged the termination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. As such, we write to formally and strongly support the passage of permanent protections for immigrant youth known as “Dreamers”, DACA recipients, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders and those protected under Deferred Enforced Departure (DED).

While NILC supports far broader reforms to address our dysfunctional and increasingly cruel immigration system and militarized interior and border enforcement, we firmly believe that Congress has an immediate and overdue responsibility to act now in passing permanent protections for specific immigrant populations who have been stripped of their protections by the current administration. Since the termination of the DACA program and the determinations to terminate TPS and DED designations for several countries, the Trump administration has put over a million lives into limbo and uncertainty of their future. DACA, TPS, and DED recipients are longstanding, integral members of our communities across the nation. Immigrant youth under the DACA program, as well as the millions of Dreamers who never qualified for DACA, have been in the United States for decades. Most have been here for the majority of their lives and know no other place as home. TPS and DED holders are similarly deeply rooted

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members of their communities and, like many Dreamers, often have U.S. citizen spouses, children, or other close relatives here in the U.S. – including DACA recipients themselves who are in the same households as TPS holders. They are our family members, our friends, and our neighbors and, as a result of the Trump administration’s actions, these immigrant communities now live in fear of losing their jobs and being separated from their loved ones if their protections end. The United States is their home, and legislation with a pathway to citizenship should be passed immediately.

The need to provide permanent protections and a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, DACA recipients, and TPS and DED holders predates this administration but has only become more urgent.

As we look forward to the introduction of a bill that provides these protections, we urge the members of this committee and Congress to see this as a crucial and overdue first step to advance legislation that upholds the following principles:

- Provides permanent protections with a clear and attainable pathway to citizenship.
- Provides protections for as many people as possible.
- Provides standalone protections that are not in exchange for harmful border militarization or interior immigration enforcement that would harm other immigrant communities.
- Does not impose a “public charge” or any other wealth tests for the protections or pathway to citizenship.
- Does not limit or end any other immigrant visa programs or make permanent changes to family immigration sponsorship.

While we are grateful for the opportunity to uplift the need and urgency for permanent protections for Dreamers, DACA recipients, and TPS and DED holders, we strongly urge the members of this committee and every member of Congress to work together to swiftly pass permanent protections for these populations. We urge the committee and all of Congress to provide relief to the over one million immigrants whose lives are full of uncertainty and fear, as well as the many immigrant youth who have never been provided an opportunity for protections in the country they call home.

We thank you for your time on this important matter.

Sincerely,

The National Immigration Law Center