



Statement for the Record from

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**Submitted to House Judiciary Subcommittee On Immigration Integrity, Security, and
Enforcement**

Hearing on The Impact of Illegal Immigration on Social Services

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United We Dream is the largest immigrant youth-led network in the United States. We create welcoming spaces for young people--regardless of immigration status-- to support, engage, and empower them to make their voices heard and win. We are a non-partisan, membership-based network made up of over 750,000 members, five branches with over 100 affiliate organizations across 28 states. Over 60 percent of our members are women and 20 percent identify as LGBTQ. United We Dream's vision is to build a multi-racial, multi-ethnic movement of young people who organize and advocate at the local and national levels for the dignity and justice of immigrants and communities of color in the United States.

We want to denounce the premise of this hearing in no uncertain terms and demonstrate in this public comment how immigrants positively impact Social Services, and in fact contribute to the growth and development of the larger economy, as well as reaffirm the intrinsic value of immigrant lives as deserving of dignity and care regardless of immigration status, like any other human being.

Firstly, we denounce the premise of this hearing. Majority Members of this Subcommittee have continually sought to malign, criminalize and scapegoat migrants by holding hearings with specious premises, racist and xenophobic statements and bad faith witnesses. Republican majority members held several hearings on the border crisis to foment anger and grief among border communities, making false claims about the Administration's entirely lawful management of the border, and using anecdotes as evidence when the data do not confirm your claims of criminality.

These hearings are not aimed at finding the truth or serving our communities. Naming a hearing "Terrorist Entry Through the Southwest Border" (which was held on September 14, 2023) when there is verifiable information showing the number of terrorists who have crossed our borders is actually zero¹, or "The Consequences of Criminal Aliens in the U.S. Communities" (held on July 13, 2023) when there are studies proving migrant communities are safer than the average American community² and migrants are proportionately less likely to commit crime³, is enough to show exactly the intention and implied message the majority leadership of this

¹"Terrorist Entry Through the Southwest Border | Cato Institute." Accessed January 10, 2024.

<https://www.cato.org/testimony/terrorist-entry-through-southwest-border>.

² Light, Michael T., Jingying He, and Jason P. Robey. "Comparing Crime Rates between Undocumented Immigrants, Legal Immigrants, and Native-Born US Citizens in Texas." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117, no. 51 (December 22, 2020): 32340–47.

<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2014704117>.

³ Adelman, Robert M., Yulin Yang, Lesley Williams Reid, James D. Bachmeier, and Mike Maciag. "Using Estimates of Undocumented Immigrants to Study the Immigration-Crime Relationship." *Journal of Crime and Justice* 44, no. 4 (August 8, 2021): 375–400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0735648X.2020.1819375>.



subcommittee wants to send with these sham hearings, and this latest one is no different.

Secondly, the scrutinization of the impact of any particular group of people in our social services is discriminatory and morally reprehensible. The fact that any one group of people would need disproportionate assistance from the government is not a reason to blame them as people but an indictment of our systems that discriminate based on specific characteristics beyond people's control and creates the need in the first place, in this instance, their immigration status. While it is true that immigrant-led households participate in welfare programs at higher rates than US-born households,⁴ there is no evidence of widespread fraud in their participation. Their eligibility can easily be explained by their overrepresentation in households experiencing poverty. In 2021, “[i]mmigrants represented 14 percent of the U.S. population..., but they were 24 percent of those experiencing poverty that year.”⁵

On the other hand, the claim that immigrants take more than they give is demonstrably false. Immigrants contribute to social welfare programs that they are not and mostly will never be eligible for, like Social Security and Medicare. A study by the Social Security Administration Office in 2010 estimated that “earnings by unauthorized immigrants result in a net positive effect on Social Security financial status generally... We estimate that future years will experience a continuation of this positive impact on the trust funds.”⁶ Many of these contributors are our members, immigrant youth who are DACA recipients and workers, who pay taxes through their jobs, property ownership and consumerism. Our most recent survey showed that 83 percent of DACA recipients are employed, 50 percent bought their first cars and 17 percent bought their first house after receiving DACA.⁷

On a more current note, there has been much discussion about asylum seekers who have had to rely on social services provided by cities, such as shelters and food donations, creating a strain on these cities resources.⁸ To make it clear, these immigrants are not undocumented, seeking

⁴ Camarota, Steven A., and Karen Zeigler. “Welfare Use by Immigrants and the U.S.-Born,” December 19, 2023. <https://cis.org/Report/Welfare-Use-Immigrants-and-USBorn>.

⁵ Batalova, Jeanne. “Understanding Poverty Declines among Immigrants and Their Children in the United States,” n.d.

⁶ Goss, Stephen, Alice Wade, J Patrick Skirvin, Michael Morris, K Mark Bye, and Danielle Huston. “SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION Office of the Chief Actuary Baltimore, Maryland,” n.d.

⁷ Center for American Progress. “DACA Boosts Recipients’ Well-Being and Economic Contributions: 2022 Survey Results,” April 27, 2023. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/daca-boosts-recipients-well-being-and-economic-contributions-2022-survey-results/>.

⁸ “Migrants Coming to US Need Housing, Food. Cities Worry about Strain.” Accessed January 10, 2024. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/09/25/migrant-surge-us-cities/70921430007/>.



asylum is a legal pathway⁹ and thus this discussion is outside the scope of this hearing. However, in an effort to be thorough, United We Dream would also like to point out that their need for these services is again, not an indictment on asylum seekers as a group, but of our system that fails to welcome migrants safely and humanely. States that send these migrants to cities outside their borders without notice or coordination in order to create chaos are playing with people's lives for malicious political gain.¹⁰ One thing Congress can do to help is expedite the eligibility for work permits, so asylum seekers do not need to rely on Social Services and can instead find work to sustain themselves.¹¹

To summarize, it should be specifically noted that:

- 1) Undocumented immigrants do not commit fraud to participate in social welfare programs.
- 2) Undocumented immigrants are locked out of most social services programs, mostly only being eligible through their US-born children.
- 3) Undocumented immigrants contribute to programs they are not eligible for, creating a net-positive impact.
- 4) Asylum seekers are not undocumented immigrants.

At United We Dream, we believe the government should work for all people, regardless of immigration status, making people's lives easier and better where possible. We operate with an abundance mindset because we know that is the truth. We know we have enough resources to help all in need and we believe in welcoming those who seek safety and a better life. We invite the members of the majority in this Subcommittee to join us in living up to American values of welcoming immigrants who have helped to build this country, who are an integral part of our history, communities and society. We invite the Subcommittee to reject hateful rhetoric of looking at any human being as undeserving of help and assistance simply based on their immigration status, and instead to recognize the reality that immigrants are our ancestors, neighbors, family members and loved ones, who contribute to our lives and our country, not only economically, but in many other tangible and intangible ways.

⁹ Office of the New York City Comptroller Brad Lander. "Facts, Not Fear: How Welcoming Immigrants Benefits New York City." Accessed January 10, 2024.

<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/facts-not-fear-how-welcoming-immigrants-benefits-new-york-city/>.

¹⁰ "Texas Is Sending Asylum Seekers to Major Cities by Bus with Little Notice. These Mayors Want to Pump the Brakes | CNN." Accessed January 10, 2024.

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/30/us/asylum-seekers-texas-city-mayors/index.html>.

¹¹ Rep. Pingree, Chellie [D-ME-1]. "H.R.1325 - 118th Congress (2023-2024): Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act of 2023." Legislation, March 1, 2023. 2023-03-01.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1325>.



We expect more from our elected officials, and we demand to see a Congress that works for people, that is focused on making people's lives better, that is productive. We demand this Subcommittee turn its focus to offering real solutions that include broader and easier pathways to immigration and citizenship and the end of inhumane treatment of immigrants in detention.

Sincerely,

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