



CHIRLA
Coalition for Humane
Immigrant Rights



May 22, 2019

Chairman Jerrold "Jerry" Nadler
U.S. House of Representatives
2132 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Vice Chair Mary Gay Scanlon
U.S. House of Representatives
1535 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: House Judiciary Committee Markup on H.R. 2820, the DREAM Act of 2019; H.R. 2821, American Promise Act of 2019

Dear Chairman Jerry Nadler, Vice Chair Mary Gay Scanlon, and House Judiciary Committee Members,

On behalf of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), the largest immigrant rights organization in the state of California, I write to express our support for H.R. 2820, the DREAM Act of 2019, and H.R. 2821, the American Promise Act of 2019. We urge all members of the committee to stand with our immigrant community, oppose all hateful, anti-immigrant provisions during markup that would further cause harm to our communities, and vote in favor of both bills.

CHIRLA was founded in 1986, in response to the passage of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), and the need to educate our immigrant community on the policy itself. Since then, CHIRLA has focused on educating, organizing and mobilizing our community so that our members are not only up to date on developments within immigration policies that could alter their livelihood, but can also serve as the best advocates for themselves. Our members serve as agents of social change and aim to achieve a world with full freedom of mobility, full human rights, and a true participatory democracy that is inclusive of immigrants in every extent. To date, we have expanded our organization to include a Legal Department to provide immigration legal services to our community, and a Policy and Advocacy Department that focuses on all levels of government to push forth pro-immigrant policies and work to achieve comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level.

During the early 2000's, our immigrant community experienced a spike in immigration enforcement because of the implementation of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), specifically the implementation of the 287(g) program, which authorized the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to deputize state and local law enforcement agents to enforce federal immigration law. In response, CHIRLA began to take initiative to inform, and bring



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awareness of the program and its negative consequences it could have on undocumented immigrant communities. Throughout our time, we have remained a consistent advocate for comprehensive immigration reform, and we served a pivotal role in the *We Are America Alliance*, which partook in the 2006 Immigration Reform Protests across the nation.

Moreover, CHIRLA has served as an advocate for undocumented student access to higher education at a state level, and established numerous clubs throughout California to provide support and resources to undocumented students. By their side, CHIRLA, contributed to the campaign for undocumented students and their accessibility to in-state tuition while attending California's public and private higher education institutions. Successfully, we helped pass the California Dream Act, AB 540, which granted access for undocumented students to in-state tuition. As a result, CHIRLA then moved to form the California DREAM Network (CDN), a network of undocumented students throughout the state of California, to help connect immigrant student groups to federal legislation that would help grant legal status to undocumented students, first version of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which was introduced in 2001.¹ Since then, CHIRLA and the CDN has been actively engaged in seeking to pass legislation that protects young immigrants from deportation.

Given the lack by Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration reform package in the last 30 years, let alone a bill that would provide relief for our immigrant youth, one can only imagine the relief that sparked throughout our communities when then President Barack Obama issued an executive order creating the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program², which allowed qualifying undocumented youth to be protected from deportation. It then should come as no surprise that this same population was distraught when that same protection was threatened by Trump as he laid out his plans to phase out the program and no longer accept new DACA applications. In fact, after such termination of DACA many faced countless uncertainties as some DACA beneficiaries served as the sole provider for their families, partially contributed financially, or could not fend for themselves as they were on the brink of losing their work permits. To date, Trump's ill-mannered intent to terminate DACA has been followed by lawsuits, and some judges have gone as far as noting that such decision to terminate DACA violated federal law.³ While court rulings in our favor provide a sense of good news⁴, it does not alleviate the unknowns that immigrant face on a daily basis.

¹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/senate-bill/1291?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22Development%2C+Relief%2C+and+Education+for+Alien+Minors%22%5D%7D&s=6&r=1>

² <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/06/15/remarks-president-immigration>

³ https://www.bloomberglaw.com/public/desktop/document/Casa_De_Maryland_v_DHS_No_181521_2019_BL_179965_4th_Cir_Ma_y_17_20?1558473807

⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2019/05/17/politics/fourth-circuit-daca/index.html>



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Soon after being sworn into office, the Trump administration geared up its anti-immigrant agenda, and since has not stopped to criminalize, attack, and vilify us immigrants. We repeatedly note the administration's efforts to curtail essential parts of our legal migration system, terminate programs that once provided our community with a sense of security from deportation, such as DACA and TPS, and continue to find ways to up his immigration enforcement machine by overspending fiscal funds to push forth-aggressive tactics by any means necessary.⁵

Last Congress, we saw both the House and Senate take action on immigration to no avail as both chambers could not pass a bill that sought to protect immigrant youth.⁶ Instead, conversations pivoted to negotiations of permanent solutions in exchange for more enforcement measures and a complete overhaul of our immigration system, as we know it.⁷ It should be noted that our youth made it clear then, and will make it clear once again that relief for them will not come at the expense of their parents and undocumented community. Our immigrant youth knew that it would then take them to become civically engaged to the extent possible that they could to contribute to a positive change. Many helped flipped seats in California with the sole purpose of one day bringing forth immigration at the forefront and revisit not only solutions for youth, but also for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) beneficiaries, Deferred Enforcement Departure (DED) holders, and all other 10 million undocumented immigrants.⁸

In California, an estimated 242,339 young people have received DACA status between 2012 and March 2017. Of said population, an estimated 72,300 undocumented students are enrolled in California's state's public colleges and universities; 60,000 at community colleges, 8300 at Cal States and 4,000 at UC's⁹.

Immigration is a very complex issue and by far one of the most contentious. This is why we should not take lightly the overwhelming support that exist in our nation for our youth. In California, a poll was conducted where it was noted that the majorities of California Democrats, Republicans and Independents support the DACA program. A survey found that while Democrats and Independents were more likely to support DACA, a solid majority of 58% Republicans were also in favor of DACA.¹⁰ This just speaks to the support immigrants have regardless of party affiliation.

It is for these reasons noted above, among others, that both CHIRLA and the CDN support H.R. 2820, the DREAM Act of 2019, and H.R. 2821, the American Promise Act of 2019, as both aim to provide our

⁵ <http://time.com/4927100/donald-trump-daca-past-statements/>

⁶ <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/2/15/17017682/senate-immigration-daca-bill-vote-failed>

⁷ <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/immigration/2018/12/18/daca-immigration-advocates-say-wont-support-trumps-wall-open-compromise>

⁸ <https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-ca-midterm-elections-dreamers-20190101-story.html>

⁹ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles>

¹⁰ <https://www.ppic.org/blog/californians-and-daca/>



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immigrant youth, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforcement Departure (DED) holders a pathway to citizenship. Our community is American in every sense of the word, but for in paper. We are glad to see Congress taking another step in the right direction to provide relief for our community that has contributed so much to this country we all call home.

We respectfully urge the House Judiciary Committee to vote in favor of the aforementioned bills, and to oppose any toxic amendments that would cause hurt to our communities instead of relief. Our immigrant families and communities deserve protections from deportations, and we stand ready to work hand in hand with you to make this a reality. In the years to come, we will continue to fight for just, and humane immigration reform.

Should you have any questions, please contact Isabel J. Sanchez at isanchez@chirla.org or at (202) 641-1525.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angelica Salas', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Angelica Salas
Executive Director, CHIRLA