



**Statement for the Record of
Community Change Action and the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM) Action
Submitted to House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Immigration and
Citizenship**

***For the Hearing: "The US Immigration System: The Need for Bold Reforms"
on Thursday, February 11, 2021, 2:15 p.m.***

Community Change Action and the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM) Action write in unqualified support for bold reforms to the United States immigration system as it currently stands. We are eager to work with Congress towards a fair and equitable roadmap to citizenship for all, using our vision, the Roadmap to Freedom, as a guide.

Community Change Action is a national organization whose mission is to build the power and capacity of low-income people, especially low-income people of color, to change their communities and public policies for the better. FIRM Action, a project of Community Change Action, with our sister organization, FIRM, is a network of 27 sister c4 organizations and 37 c3 organizations and four organizing networks across 30 states.

The Roadmap to Unity and Freedom is our progressive vision for immigration in America that took the FIRM Network years to create, and serves as a basis for the Roadmap to Freedom Resolution ([H. Res. 64](#)) introduced this Congress by Representatives Pramila Jayapal, Judy Chu, Yvette Clarke, Chuy Garcia, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The Roadmap is rooted in the voices of dozens of member organizations who represent hundreds of thousands of immigrant families across the country, and as a visionary policy platform it embodies affirmative values and principles by which we would measure any immigration proposal in the 117th Congress.

The Roadmap to Freedom is our North Star:

- Promoting full citizenship that is equitable and accessible and centering family unity so that barriers to reunifying families are eliminated, family-based immigration is strengthened, and deported individuals can return home to their families and communities in the U.S.;
- Articulating the key ways in which the immigration system must be reformed, especially the entanglement of the criminal and deportation systems, guaranteed access to legal defense, and ending detention in its many forms; and
- Ensuring immigrants having access to health care, housing, workforce development training--as we have all known but the pandemic has laid bare--immigrants lead full, integrated lives and that should be reflected in all policy, not just immigration.

As we approach nearly one year of enduring these health and economic crises, immigrants, Latinx, Black, Native and AAPI people have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic while working the essential jobs to keep our country running. Almost 3 out of every 4 undocumented immigrants are performing essential work from caring for elderly Americans and children to putting food on our tables. Because of their status, these essential

workers have been left out of COVID response efforts, and many lacking access to critical health care. For a robust economic and public health recovery, we must embrace these workers and their families. As this committee considers bold reforms to the immigration system, Congress must center those directly impacted in all of the solutions it champions, from economic relief and recovery, to legalization, to government funding.

In our campaigns, both “Freedom Together: Citizenship, Relief, and Recovery” and “We Are Home,” we believe that “We the People” should apply to all people. Specifically, we seek to create a roadmap to citizenship, to overhaul interior enforcement that has broken families apart, and to generate broad affirmative relief for immigrants. We are not alone in this demand for action--according to a recent [PRRI poll](#), 80% of Americans back permanent legal status for undocumented immigrants, including a 64% majority that support citizenship.

After the devastation that the previous administration wrought on immigrant families and the very fairness of our immigration system, there is much work to be done. Our nation has wept as we witnessed countless families separated from their loved ones during migration processes while given few options for reuniting. The aggressive reliance on detention in the U.S. has caused detrimental harm to the integrity of our immigration system; it is essential to reevaluate as well as drastically mitigate the role of immigration detention in the U.S. Not to mention our asylum and refugee systems have been virtually extinguished by the previous Administration. And for immigrants who have been granted temporary protection from deportation through initiatives like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Trump took steps to eliminate DACA and ended TPS for the vast majority of its beneficiaries, demonstrating the precarious nature of these programs.

We applaud President Biden’s prioritization of immigration policy during his first month in office, such as his Day 1 proposal to overhaul immigration policies including granting a pathway to citizenship for the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants who call this country home. They are our neighbors, friends, coworkers; they pray next to us and shop in the same stores. Additionally, we support the President’s decisions to reverse the Muslim ban, preserve DACA, halt construction of the border wall, and put a moratorium on deportations. We look forward to the Administration eliminating the backlogs in immigration processing that separate families and hurt our economy. However, there is still a long way to go, and there is much that can only be done through Congressional action. It is our hope that this Committee will focus on updating and improving the immigration code in the myriad of ways that call out for attention, including:

- Increasing the caps on immigration that the US has imposed and promoting and preserving diversity by increasing diversity visas.
- Reclassifying lawful permanent residents as immediate relatives and protecting the families of H-4 visa holders from losing work authorization.
- Extending equality for same-sex partners in immigration law and providing relief for orphans, widows, and stepchildren.
- Eliminating the 3-year, 10-year, and permanent bars on re-entry to the country and providing family unity waivers of inadmissibility and deportability ground.

Furthermore, we are calling on the House to lay the tracks for broad legalization by immediately passing an improved American Dream and Promise Act and the Farm Worker Modernization Act – both of which passed the House in the last Congress – before April 1st of this year to ensure swift consideration and passage by the Senate. We also ask Congress to include a pathway to citizenship for the five million essential workers who have risked their lives to provide essential services through the pandemic, as well as their families, in the upcoming economic recovery, jobs and infrastructure package.

We have ambitious visions for our future. We must both stand for the most inclusive vision of America and build bridges for immediate action. We reject vociferously the notion that there is some cap on the amount of progress we can make. Every day of inaction, there are beloved and integral people to our communities who cannot see their children get married, who cannot say goodbye to aging or ill parents, and who cannot even hug their life partner. This family separation has now gone on for decades due to the outdated approach to handling immigration. Now is the time for the Roadmap to Freedom and to boldly transform the immigration system.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.