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CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE OF TEXAS

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
AND CITIZENSHIP

HEARING STATEMENT
“U.S. IMMIGRATION SYSTEM:
NEED FOR BOLD REFORMS”

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2021
2:00 P.M. (EST)
CISCO WEBEX

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- Thank you, Chairwoman Lofgren and Ranking Member McClintock, for convening this hearing on the “Need For Bold Reforms” to the U.S. Immigration System.
- Let me welcome our witness:
 1. Marielena Hincapié, Executive Director National Immigration Law Center.

2. Jennifer Hunt, James Cullen Chair in Economics
Rutgers University.
3. John Lettieri, President and CEO
Economic Innovation Group.
4. *Peter Kirsanow, Commissioner
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Minority Witness)*

- Thank you for your participation and I look forward to hearing your perspective on the need for bold action to overhaul and modernize the U.S. immigration system to make it fairer and more humane and to discussing with you the ways and means to bring this about.
- Madam Chairwoman, before I get to my questions, **I ask unanimous consent to include hearing testimony previously delivered by Mr. Wade Henderson of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights**, who has testified in numerous House and Senate hearings throughout the years, responding squarely to some of the issues raised by Mr. Kirsanow.
- First, **Mr. Henderson points out that there is no consensus among economists on the role immigration plays in longstanding black unemployment rates;** second, there are a lot of reforms to antidiscrimination and labor laws and job training that would far more directly address black unemployment, and third, **African Americans still overwhelmingly support immigration reform that provides a path to citizenship, and they do not appreciate scapegoating or being used to create a wedge.**
- Madam Chairwoman, on Day One of the Biden Administration, the President released his vision for immigration reform, which unlike the cruel and mean-spirited policies of his predecessor, does call for separating children from their parents or putting babies in cages or diverting money from military families to build a wall to deter imaginary caravans of bad hombres.

- Instead, the President’s U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 includes a path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented individuals in the United States, reforms to the family- and employment-based immigration systems, and provisions to facilitate immigrant integration, protect workers from exploitation and to improve border technology and infrastructure.
- Ensuring a path to earned citizenship is a non-negotiable principle for me and the *sine qua non* of meaningful immigration reform legislation.
- Indeed, providing a path to earned access to citizenship has been a central feature of every comprehensive immigration reform bill I have co-sponsored or sponsored in the Congress since 2007 when I served as Ranking Member of this Subcommittee on Immigration and introduced the “*Save America Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act, (H.R. 1525)*,” which I reintroduced in each succeeding Congress.
- Like Section 501 of my legislation, the President’s U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 provides a path to earned legalization status to those 11 million undocumented immigrants who have resided in the United States for 5 years and meet other eligibility requirements.
- Madam Speaker, as we stand today on the precipice of at long last passing comprehensive and humane immigration reform, I am thinking of the hundreds of thousands of young immigrants whose lives will be changed for the better by keeping our promise to them, so they can realize their dreams and making America better, stronger, and more prosperous.
- And at this moment, I am thinking of Alonso Guillen, an heroic DREAMER who lived in my congressional district, and who came to the United States from Mexico as a child and died when his boat capsized while he was rescuing survivors of the flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey in the Houston area.
- That is the type of courage, honor, and commitment to service we

are talking when we speak of DREAMERS.

- I am mindful also Madam Speaker that in addition to helping restore America's reputation as the most welcoming nation on earth, the President's U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 also positions America to better compete and win in the global economy of the 21st century.
- According to expert studies, including one by the Center for American Progress, continuing deferred action for childhood arrivals would result in a gain of \$460.3 billion from the national GDP over the ensuing decade and would provide an estimated 685,000 workers to the nation's economy and workforce at a time when more, not fewer, workers are desperately needed.
- And 10 states, including my home state of Texas, would stand to gain more than \$8 billion annually in state GDP.
- Madam Speaker, immigrants are part of Texas's social fabric.
- Texas is home to 386,300 Dreamers 112,000 of whom reside in Harris County.
- These individuals live with 845,300 family members and among those family members, 178,700 are U.S.-born citizen children.
- Texas immigrants own 43,500 homes in Texas and pay \$340,500,000 in annual mortgage payments and their households contribute \$2,234,800,000 in federal taxes and \$1,265,200,000 in state and local taxes each year.
- Annually, these households generate \$10,519,000,000 in spending power in Texas and help power the national economy.
- Comprehensive immigration reform is desperately needed to ensure that Lady Liberty's lamp remains the symbol of a land that welcomes immigrants to a community of immigrants and does so in a manner that secures our borders and protects our homeland.

- Madam Chairwoman, let us seize the opportunity to pass legislation that secures our borders, preserves America's character as the most open and welcoming country in the history of the world, and will yield hundreds of billions of dollars in economic growth.
- Thank you. I yield back my time.