



COALITION FOR HUMANE IMMIGRANT RIGHTS OF LOS ANGELES

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18 June 2013

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chairman of the House Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable John Conyers
Ranking Member of the House Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Trey Gowdy
Chairman of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security
The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security

2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Markup of HR 2278, the "Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act" (SAFE Act)

Dear Chairman Goodlatte, Ranking Member Conyers, Chairman Gowdy and Ranking Member Lofgren:

We write to follow up on our recent letter, dated 13 June 2013, which expressed grave concerns regarding HR 2278's potentially disastrous effects on public safety by jettisoning all that has been learned after decades of community policing. In addition, by further criminalizing undocumented immigrants present in the United States to work and raise their families, HR 2278 replicates the harmful policy and politics of its kindred spirit bill from 2005, HR 4437 – on which many members of this committee voted.

Our previous letter was submitted ahead of the hearing that the committee held on 13 June 2013, one which immigrants in Los Angeles and the rest of California watched closely. Unfortunately, the tone that the hearing struck was one of fear, of casting the immigrant as an "other", as someone to be feared in general and someone likely to commit crime against Americans. The opposite is true – as demonstrated in study after study, most recently in one published in the Annals of the American Academy on Political and Social Science – immigration decreases crime.¹ As we referenced in our earlier letter, this reality is furthered bolstered when trust between police and the immigrant communities is strong: Resulting in crimes being reported, witnesses coming forward and thus more likely to be solved. Very little of this aspect was addressed by the proponents of HR2278. Indeed, HR 2278 appears to entirely dismiss this form of community policing espoused by the Police Chiefs of many of the largest US Cities, the very places that suffer from crime.

Two witnesses at the hearing, Mr. Jamiel Shaw, Sr. and Ms. Sabine Durden, were parents of children lost to violence and criminal behavior. Our hearts go out to these fellow Californians – whose similar losses are shared by many parents in the immigrant



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communities of our great state. At public hearings, we have in the past engaged with Mr. Shaw and his family regarding policing in Los Angeles, and how best to prevent a repeat of the unspeakable crime that took their son away from them. Their voices, and that of others like Ms. Durden, must be heard as must many in the impacted communities and those from law enforcement with a differing perspective.

Regrettably, many of those voices have not been heard at all. Yet less than a week after the aforementioned hearing, the Committee is moving ahead with a markup of a bill that would have far-reaching implications. Moreover, with the introduction of several amendments a highly problematic bill now risks snowballing into an anti-immigrant catchall. In particular, two amendments proposed by Representative King of Iowa are deeply troubling. Based on radical constitutional interpretations and sensationalist claims, these amendments would a) strip the Executive Branch of discretionary powers to prioritize who is a threat and b) eliminate birthright citizenship for children born in the United States. Eliminating discretionary powers that law enforcement needs, and that were supported on a bi-partisan basis just ten years, is a peculiar course of action to take in the name of public safety.ⁱⁱ Doing away with the time-tested birthright citizenship would render the United States no different than many countries that perpetuate a second class status across generations, and would prove extremely costly to society as a whole.ⁱⁱⁱ

We must remind you that deportations of immigrants, many via the already broad interior enforcement regime, are at a record high, and as a result families are being torn apart. This bill, HR 2278, envisions a future where this continues, and at an accelerated pace to boot. As such, it neither makes our communities safe, nor does it contribute to the overall solution to our broken immigration system that we so desperately need. For these reasons and more, we respectfully and strongly urge you to reconsider this approach.

If you have any questions, please contact Rita Medina at rmedina@chirla.org or Joseph Villela at jvillela@chirla.org.

Sincerely,

Angelica Salas, Executive Director
CHIRLA

ⁱ “Study: Immigration lowers crime”, Ari Melber, 5/27/13 <http://tv.msnbc.com/2013/05/28/study-immigration-lowers-crime/>

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ “On Applying Prosecutorial Discretion to Immigration Cases, Politifact Texas, 8/7/11, <http://www.politifact.com/texas/statements/2011/aug/07/lamar-smith/lamar-smith-urged-immigration-authorities-apply-d/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ending Birthright Citizenship Would be Costly for Americans, Stuart Anderson, 3/9/12, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2012/03/09/ending-birthright-citizenship-would-be-costly-for-americans/>