



March 3, 2015

Oppose the “Legal Workforce Act,” the
“Michael Davis, Jr. in Honor of State and Local Law Enforcement Act,” the
“Protection of Children Act,” and the
“Asylum Reform and Border Protection Act”

Dear Member, House Committee on the Judiciary:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 200 national advocacy organizations, we urge you to oppose the four immigration-related bills currently being marked up in the Judiciary Committee. After more than a year and a half since Congress last took any meaningful action on one of the most important issues facing our nation, we are profoundly disappointed that the Committee is resorting to a lopsided, heavy-handed approach to immigration reform that will endanger vulnerable immigrants, increase the likelihood of civil and human rights violations, and ultimately make the problems with our immigration system worse rather than better. We urge you to reject all four of the bills discussed below.

H.R. 1147, the “Legal Workforce Act,” offers a false promise of stopping unauthorized immigration by expanding the Electronic Employment Verification System, or E-Verify program. Due to the high error rates in the E-Verify system, many people are misidentified as legal when they are not, while many others – particularly those not born in the United States – are flagged as unauthorized when they are in fact authorized to work, and resolving errors is time-consuming and expensive. H.R. 1147 also encourages profiling of lawful workers, as under-trained employees may simply assume a worker is undocumented, including through prejudgments on bases prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. At the same time, H.R. 1147 would place excessive and costly new burdens on the Social Security Administration, threatening its core mission of serving retired Americans and people with disabilities. Finally, H.R. 1147 rests upon a badly mistaken premise. Millions of unauthorized workers will not leave the U.S. because of E-Verify. Instead, the program will simply drive unauthorized labor further underground, causing drastic losses in tax revenues as well as to the Social Security trust fund, and it will enable unscrupulous employers to mistreat workers with greater impunity.

H.R. 1148, the “Michael Davis, Jr. in Honor of State and Local Law Enforcement Act,” contains a slew of heavy-handed changes in immigration enforcement practices that turn due process on its head and senselessly put millions of hardworking, family-oriented immigrants at increased risk of deportation. Among other things, H.R. 1148 would overturn the Obama administration’s program to spare parents of U.S. citizens or lawful residents from deportation, and split countless families apart in the process. It would end the 2012 program that allows hundreds of thousands of “Dreamers” – who were brought into the United States through no fault of their own, and who have thrived here in spite of the legal obstacles they face – even though bipartisan majorities in the House and Senate have previously agreed that Dreamers are especially deserving of a chance to stay in the only country they call home. H.R. 1148 would also greatly expand the use of state and local resources to enforce immigration law, leading to increased racial and ethnic profiling and undermining

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community policing efforts. It would also drastically expand the unnecessary, inhumane, and costly detention of nonviolent immigrants, subject them to new criminal penalties regardless of the reason for their unauthorized status, and eviscerate many of the legal protections that we hold out as a model for the rest of the world.

H.R. 1149, the “Protection of Children Act,” calls for drastic and inhumane roll backs of important safeguards that Congress unanimously enacted in 2008 to help many children who are fleeing from trafficking, persecution, or violence in their home countries. It would subject all unaccompanied alien children (UACs) to fast-track screening procedures that are currently applied to children who are Mexican nationals. These expedited procedures have resulted in the return of 95.5 percent of Mexican children even though studies have shown that well over half of their cases would have raised international protection concerns had they been given a proper hearing. H.R. 1149 would rush traumatized children, many of whom have fled conditions that most of us could not possibly imagine, through a highly complicated and adversarial immigration system with no guarantee of adequate representation. It imposes a process that is virtually guaranteed to send countless numbers of children back to the abuses and violence they fled.

Finally, H.R. 1153, the “Asylum Reform and Border Protection Act,” would double down on the unwarranted and inhumane changes in H.R. 1149 by making sweeping changes to our asylum system that would apply to anyone – adults and children alike – who turns to the United States for protection from violence or persecution in their home countries. It would increase the likelihood that many refugees will be erroneously turned away under expedited removal procedures, subject many others to additional and unnecessary trauma through expanded detention policies, and introduce new arbitrary restrictions that, rather than reduce fraud, will simply reduce the total number of deserving refugees who are ultimately offered protection.

For the above reasons, we urge you to oppose H.R. 1147, H.R. 1148, H.R. 1149, and H.R. 1153. If you have any questions, please contact either of us, or Senior Counsel Rob Randhava, at (202) 466-3311.

Sincerely,

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