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Written Testimony of the League of United Latin American Citizens

Margaret Moran
National President

For a Hearing on
Birthright Citizenship: Is it the right Policy for America

Submitted to the
U.S. House Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security

April 27, 2015

Chairman Gowdy, Ranking Member Lofgren, and members of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security:

On behalf of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the nation's oldest and largest Latino civil rights organization, I thank you for your willingness to accept public testimony to support the constitutionally affirmed concept of birthright citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Founded in 1929, the League of United Latin American Citizens works to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, housing, health and civil rights of the Hispanic population of the United States. LULAC's founding happened over 30 years after the Supreme Court's decisive ruling in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* which helped establish key precedent in the interpretation of the citizenship clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution

Despite those 30 years, LULAC was created at a time in our country's history when U.S. –born Hispanics, despite their contributions to American society, were denied basic civil and human rights. As our LULAC archives describe the events of those times - *Mexican Americans were not allowed to learn English. Thus, they were disenfranchised and unable to vote. Many were unable to pay voting taxes. Thus, their Anglo bosses paid this charge and told them who to vote for. Many Mexican American families worked in fields, farms, and ranches and their children never went to school. Many were denied jobs because they were perceived as lazy, poorly dressed, dirty, ill-educated, and thought to be thieves. American children had to attend segregated schools known as "Mexican Schools." In those days "Mexican Schools" were legal in the Southwest. These schools were in buildings with deplorable conditions.*

This was the discrimination that led many Mexican Americans to build strong, volunteer-based organizations like LULAC, back in 1929. Today, while Latinos have made significant strides and are on pace to continue to grow as the largest ethnic minority in the United States, our organization is incredibly disappointed with efforts to repeal and/or alter the citizenship clause of the 14th Amendment and set the clock back.

While the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution clearly states that “all persons born or naturalized in the United States” are citizens, anti-immigrant members of Congress are politicizing that definition in an attempt to deny countless U.S.-born Latino children of immigrant parents their citizenship rights afforded to them by the Constitution. It is clear that efforts to undo the citizenship clause are deeply rooted in xenophobia and are a political ploy aimed at galvanizing the support of radical anti-immigrant voters.

Ending birthright citizenship is a terrible idea, and stripping citizenship from U.S. born children of immigrants is completely unacceptable. Just last week, some in the U.S. Senate sought to poison a debate on a human trafficking bill by pressing forward with anti-immigrant birthright citizenship amendments. Attempts to alter birthright citizenship to deny Latino children citizenship would send a message to our community that Latino immigrants are not valued by this Congress.

On behalf of the 135,000 members of LULAC, I urge you to oppose any efforts by those seeking to revoke and redefine citizenship. As the House moves forward with its legislative business, I hope that you keep the views of our organization in mind and stand up to any anti-immigrant and anti-Latino legislation that makes its way to the floor.