



COALITION FOR HUMANE IMMIGRANT RIGHTS OF LOS ANGELES

March 2, 2015

Chairman, Hon. Trey Gowdy
House Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security
2138 Rayburn House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member, Hon. Zoe Lofgren
B-351 Rayburn House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Gowdy,

The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) is a California based organization whose mission is to advance the human and civil rights of immigrants and refugees in Los Angeles. CHIRLA advocates on behalf of this community through policy & advocacy, organizing, education and community building. We have long recognized that our country operates under a broken immigration system that focuses on enforcement as a solution and keeps families apart. We have been encouraged by the introduction of comprehensive immigration bills introduced in the past congress, but are extremely dismayed to see that this congress is solely focused on harmful anti-immigrant legislation. This is unacceptable and we strongly oppose the bills set forth for markup this week, **H.R. 1148, H.R. 1153, H.R. 1149 and H.R. 1147**. These bills only seek to further cripple the already broken immigration system, narrow existing benefits and nationally criminalize those who are without status.

H.R. 1148: Michael Davis, Jr. in Honor of State and Local Law Enforcement Act

Similar to the infamous SAFE Act of the 113th congress, this bill seeks to mandate that local law enforce agencies act as immigration enforcement bodies, eliminating our current discretion and essentially nationalizing the anti-immigrant S.B 1070 policy created in Arizona. In addition to this, the bill encourages racial profiling, erodes public trust in law enforcement and denies protections to vulnerable individuals fleeing persecution. The bill goes beyond demonizing and criminalizing immigrants and also criminalizes churches, community organizations and individuals who seek to help migrants. The bill would also block the Department of Homeland Security from implementing nearly all of the November 20, 2014 executive actions. This prevents DHS from prioritizing enforcement resources to target serious threats to national security and public safety, effectively jeopardizing the safety of our communities rather than strengthening it.

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
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We have worked to ensure that we build trust among immigrants in our communities, demanding that police act as immigration agents distracts them from their core duties of providing order and protection. It weakens community-policing initiatives by undermining carefully established trust with community members, discourages crime victims and witnesses from reporting crimes.

Adding immigration enforcement to the duties of local law enforcement is a strain on already limited resources. Immigration law is complex, technical and changes often, immigration laws have been compare to tax laws due to its complexity, thus asking local law officers would be like asking them to stay abreast with all tax law and calculate individual's refunds as they enforce criminal laws. We are committed to ensuring that the public is safe and are we utilizing all of the resources vehicles available to us to achieve that goal. H.R. 1148 overreaches by eradicating our discretion and improvements we have made to regain the trust among immigrant communities.

H.R. 1149: the Protection of Children Act 2015

While the title of this bill seems harmless, the policy created within the language does quite the opposite of protect. This bill seeks to roll back protections put in place the TVPRA by allowing children to be deported after a very basic interview and encounter with any border patrol agent. This policy would send the children right back to the very violence, abuse and poverty they were trying to escape and also leaves them vulnerable smugglers and bad actors at the border.

In addition to the protections rollback at the border this bill seeks to cement the ongoing "rocket docket," into U.S. policy around the UACs by requiring any minor who is able to enter the country and in the care of DHS and ORR (Office of Refugee Resettlement) go to trial within 7 days. This would not only inundate our already overwhelmed immigration courts and put other cases on the back burner, but it does not allow sufficient time for an attorney to be linked with the child and form a case that could realistically go to trial. Once a child is connected with an attorney, it often takes many months for the attorney to build a relationship with that child that they feel safe sharing their story. Additionally, the allotted 7 days would make building an asylum case impossible as it is not enough time to gather any needed evidence. This policy would essentially be denying these children true due process.

Beyond the deep concerns CHIRLA has with rolling back the TVPRA protections, H.R. 1149 would require that the ORR report to DHS on the immigration status of the family members who act as guardians for the unaccompanied minors. This would pose a significant problem as many of these parents and families have undocumented relatives living in their house or may be without status themselves. This puts the parent in a difficult situation of either caring for their child (after in many cases years of separation) and risking deportation or deportation of other family members or sending their child to be cared for with strangers or worse yet, a detention center.

H.R. 1153 the Asylum Reform and Border Patrol Act

In addition to containing similar harmful provisions as the Protection of Children Act, such as the expedited removal of unaccompanied minor children and giving border patrol agents the authority to decide whether a minor child should be able to stay or be deported, H.R. 5137 would also narrow the protections available under asylum. The bill as is would set an even higher standard of proof for asylum screenings. This is especially troublesome as the system is already difficult to navigate, especially for a child who may not even understand the process or what proof may be needed to make



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a case. It is unconscionable to expect a child, still recovering from a harrowing journey and held in jail-like facilities, to meet such a high standard.

H.R. 1147: the “Legal Workforce Act”

This bill, similar to the E-verify bill from last congress, mandates that all U.S. employers actively participate in the flawed e-verify program. This program not only places great strain on businesses of all sizes, but puts the jobs of U.S. citizen employees in jeopardy, with false positives in the systems and would cause hundreds of thousands of unauthorized workers in the United States to lose their jobs. This legislation also leaves workers vulnerable to bad actor employers, wage theft and work place intimidation. Immigrations workers are a vital part of our U.S. economy and we should be putting forth legislation that supports these workers and allows them to move out of the shadows instead of pushing them further into the underground economy. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that mandatory implementation of E-Verify will increase the federal budget deficit by a staggering \$30 billion and will cost government and private employers over \$1.2 billion to implement.

CHIRLA believes that we need to find a solution to our broken immigration system and that now is the time to have that discussion. We cannot however, accept that bad piecemeal enforcement policies are the only starting point for this discussion as they are not a solution to the larger issue of keeping families together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angelica Salas", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Angelica Salas,
Executive Director, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)