

June 18, 2013

Dear Senator,

We, the undersigned organizations who advocate on behalf of children and families, urge you to stand up for children by ensuring that their needs and interests are a priority as the immigration reform bill (S.744) is considered on the Senate floor.

The consistent failure of immigration policies to consider children's well-being and promote family unity has had devastating outcomes. The Department of Homeland Security reports that 205,000 parents of U.S. citizen children were removed in the 26 months between July 2010 and September 2012, and research shows that due to our broken immigration system children in mixed-legal status families suffer from poorer health outcomes, emotional trauma, economic instability, poor educational outcomes, and limited access to critical services and programs. Unaccompanied immigrant children are also a particularly vulnerable segment of the child population, and many that have endured dangerous journeys to the U.S. to seek refuge or reunification with family members encounter a new set of risks as they confront our complex immigration system.

While S. 744 as currently drafted represents a historic step forward for immigrant children and children in immigrant families, the bill still falls short of fully protecting the rights of children and ensuring access to critical safety net programs. As the youngest and most vulnerable members of our society, children are the most deserving of protection under the law, and every child in America should have access to the services and resources they need to grow into successful adults.

To ensure that children's interests are taken into account during the Senate floor debate, we ask you to:

- Protect S.744's pathway to citizenship for the 11 million, including the DREAM Act, and ensure that the youngest DREAMers have access to the same 5-year pathway to citizenship as older DREAMers
- Support efforts to provide equal access to health services and programs that are critical to children's health and well-being, and defend against efforts to further limit children's access to these programs
- Defend access to critical income supports for children and families, such as the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and defend against efforts to prevent low-income immigrant families from accessing the path to citizenship and income supports
- Support proposals that would promote family unity and protect the provisions in S.744 that keep families together, including improvements to the family-based immigration system; the ability of immigration judges to consider hardship to children in removal and inadmissibility decisions; and the provision that would provide a means for certain removed immigrants, such as parents of U.S. citizen children and DREAM-eligible youth, to return to the U.S. and apply for citizenship
- Protect the provisions in S.744 that would ensure that immigration enforcement measures no longer needlessly separate families or cause harm to children
- Defend the provisions in S.744 that would improve protections for unaccompanied immigrant children, including access to legal representation and improved screening and training mechanisms for immigration enforcement personnel, and support efforts to further ensure that immigration enforcement actions duly consider the best interest of the child

Sincerely,

Advocacy for Justice and Peace Committee of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Advocates for Children and Youth (Maryland)
Advocates for Children of NJ
Alliance for a Just Society
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
Americans for Immigrant Justice, formerly Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence
Asian American & Pacific Islander Christians for Social Justice (California)
Asian American Justice Center, member of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice
ASISTA Immigration Assistance (Iowa)
Association for Childhood Education International
Breakthrough
Briarwood Presbyterian Church Foster Care Ministry (Illinois)
Campaign for Better Health Care (Illinois)
Casa Latina (Michigan)
Casa Michoacan (Illinois)
Catholic Charities Fort Worth
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Center for Public Policy Priorities (Texas)
Center for the Human Rights of Children, Loyola University Chicago (Illinois)
Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers (Illinois)
Children's Action Alliance (Arizona)
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Alliance (Washington)
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Health Fund
CHTOP, Inc.
CLUE Santa Barbara
CNMI Board of Parole
Coalition for Asian American Children & Families (New York)
Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (California)
Concerned Educators Allied for a Safe Environment (CEASE)
CT Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (Connecticut)
Dignity Health
Dominican Sisters of Houston
Families & Criminal Justice
First Focus
Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project (Arizona)
For Families LLC (New Mexico)

Futures Without Violence
Georgia Rural Urban Summit (Georgia)
Grossman Law, LLC
Healthy Teen Network
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (Maine)
Immigration Counseling Service (ICS) (Oregon)
Institute for Women in Migration (International: Mexico City)
Jesuit Social Research Institute (Louisiana)
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
Kino Border Initiative (Arizona)
La Fuente, Tri-State Worker and Community Fund (New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut)
La Raza Centro Legal
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (California)
Luther College Student Congregation
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF)
Migration and Human Rights Project, Boston College (Massachusetts)
MomsRising
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Center for Adoption Law & Policy
National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health
National Council of Jewish Women
National Crittenton Foundation
National Education Association (NEA)
National Foster Parents Association
National Immigration Forum
National Immigration Law Center
National Latino Children's Institute
Nebraska Families Collaborative
NETWORK A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community
New Mexico Voices for Children
New Sanctuary Coalition
One Michigan (Michigan)
OneAmerica (Washington)
PB&J Family Services Inc
Pennsylvania Council of Churches (Pennsylvania)

Political Asylum Immigration Representation Project (Massachusetts)
Public Counsel (California)
Reformed Church of Highland Park, NJ
Refugee & Immigration Ministries
RESULTS
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center (South Carolina)
Shelby County Foster Parents Association
Sin Fronteras (California and Maryland)
Sisters of St. Francis (Colorado)
South Asian Network (SAN)
Srs. of St. Francis of Philadelphia (Pennsylvania)
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (New Jersey)
Texans Care for Children (Texas)
The Children's Partnership
The Domestic Violence Action Center
The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey
Think of Us
TODEC Legal Center (California)
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ames, Iowa
United We Dream
University of Florida, Levin College of Law
University of Tulsa Legal Clinic (Oklahoma)
Voices for America's Children
Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (Wisconsin)
Women's Refugee Commission
Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights at the University of Chicago
Youth Law Center
ZERO TO THREE