

August 24, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write from the state of Pennsylvania to urge you to take immediate action to improve our broken immigration system and provide protections for immigrant families who have long called America their home.

In the absence of congressional action to deliver immigration reform legislation, hundreds of thousands of immigrant families, including Dreamers and essential undocumented workers who have contributed for years to our local communities and economy, continue to live with the fear of deportation. These families belong to our communities and contribute greatly to our cultural and economic growth, and yet they have no lawful avenue to gain legal status.

We urge you to take executive action within your authority to provide these families with access to legal protections that will allow them to remain with their family members, including their U.S. citizen children and loved ones. The threats to immigrant families continue to grow as extremist politicians propose policies that could ultimately upend their lives and impact the stability of our local communities and economy.

Mr. President, your administration has made enormous strides on immigration. You have reversed most of the cruel measures put in place by the previous administration. You have expanded legal pathways to provide safe options for those from the Americas who are in desperate need of safety and opportunity. You are working to bring more order to the southern border with a combination of strategies.

We believe that what is needed now is to address long-term populations living and working in America. Here are three areas that would help settled immigrants currently in legal limbo, all of which enjoy broad support with Americans.

- 1) **Protect Dreamers by getting ahead of the termination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy:** The DACA case will be at the Supreme Court imminently, and the conservative majority could strike down the popular measure put in place during the Obama-Biden administration. There is no one single policy proposal that is likely to provide relief to the majority of the 595,000 DACA recipients, so a multi-faced holistic approach to protect DACA recipients plus is needed:
 - a) Ensure that as many existing DACA recipients as possible can continue to access DACA and keep their protections by prioritizing this casework at USCIS;

- b) Scale existing policy avenues including advance parole; and
 - c) Streamline existing legal processes to access lawful permanent residency, as called for in this [letter](#) from Senators Durbin, Cortez-Masto, Menendez, Padilla, and Lujan.
- 2) **Extend and expand Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Venezuela, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras:** Congress has given the executive branch the clear authority to designate nationals from countries that are dangerous and unstable for temporary protection and work permission. For example, by updating the eligibility date on TPS for Venezuela, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras, undocumented immigrants who have been here for years could apply for work authorization and protection from deportation through TPS, allowing many of our immigrant community members who are in our state to fill critical jobs and remain together with their families.
- 3) **Reduce family reunification backlogs:** By leveraging the DHS Secretary’s parole and deferred action authorities in narrowly tailored ways for those already living here who are stuck in immigration backlogs, the Administration can both reduce the long backlogs that destabilize and divide families, and enable eligible undocumented immigrants to gain legal status through their family members – without being subjected to years-long delays.

In your 2023 State of the Union address, you rightly [promised](#) to proceed in a balanced fashion – to both secure our border *and* to humanely address the immigrant families who are already settled in America. We agree with you that legislation is the best way to fashion permanent solutions. However, extreme partisanship has stalled congressional action, leaving millions of Dreamers, essential undocumented workers, and immigrant families without a way to gain lawful status despite their immense contributions. Mr. President, please use every tool at your disposal to make our immigration system better.

We write from a state where immigrant workers and families are vital members of our communities. We live, work, pray and play with those who have come to America to build a better life for their families. We urge you to use your authority to make life better in our states by extending and expanding protections for our friends and neighbors.

SIGNED,

Jim Kenney, Mayor of Philadelphia
Ed Gainey, Mayor of Pittsburgh
Paige G. Cagnetti, Mayor of Scranton
Michael Helfrich, Mayor of York
Danene Sorace, Mayor of Lancaster
Joseph V. Schember, Mayor of Erie