



For Immediate Release

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End SIJS Backlog Coalition Applauds Introduction of the Protect Vulnerable Immigrant Youth Act

Washington, DC – Today U.S. Representatives Jimmy Gomez (CA-34), Zoe Lofgren (CA-19), and Adriano Espaillat (NY-13) re-introduced the Protect Vulnerable Immigrant Youth Act in the House. Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (NV) introduced the bill in the Senate on June 8. This critical piece of legislation would protect immigrant youth who are survivors of abuse, abandonment, and neglect from further harms - including trafficking, labor exploitation, and homelessness - by allowing them to achieve much needed permanency in the United States.

A growing years-long visa backlog is leaving thousands of immigrant children undocumented and unprotected. Federal immigration authorities have granted these children a humanitarian protection called Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) but a technical oversight in the law places SIJS visas in an employment-based visa category with a very limited pool, forcing children to wait years for green cards. This oversight has left vulnerable youth living in fear of deportation and has created barriers in finding safe jobs, pursuing their education, and serving in the military. This bill would address this technical oversight, which for years has had devastating impacts on the lives of the children and youth, by lifting the visa caps.

“It is unconscionable and completely avoidable that children who have already been granted SIJS are trapped in a years-long limbo that endangers their lives, all because SIJS was miscategorized in the visa system. It makes no sense for these children to be competing for visas with immigrants seeking employment-based status,” said **Rachel Davidson, Director of the End SIJS Backlog Coalition, a project of the National Immigration Project.** “The Protect Vulnerable Immigrant Youth Act would ensure that thousands of SIJS youth are protected from deportation and can achieve the permanency in the United States that Congress intended. The End SIJS Backlog

Coalition commends Representatives Jimmy Gomez, Zoe Lofgren, Adriano Espaillat, and Senator Catherine Cortez Masto for introducing this important bill. We will continue to work tirelessly alongside them to end the harmful backlog imposed on SIJS youth.”

The [End SIJS Backlog Coalition](#) is a national group of lawyers, immigrant youth, child welfare organizations and other stakeholders working together to end the SIJS backlog.

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