



FIRST FOCUS CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY: MARK UP OF H.R.2820, THE DREAM ACT, H.R. 2821, THE AMERICAN PROMISE ACT, AND H.R. 549, THE VENEZUELA TPS ACT OF 2019

MAY 22, 2019

On behalf of the First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, we write today in support of H.R. 2820, *The Dream Act of 2019*; H.R. 2821, *The American Promise Act of 2019*; and H.R. 549, the Venezuela TPS Act of 2019.

Because Congress has neglected to act, the future for more than 800,000 recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program still remains uncertain. DACA recipients and Dreamers have shown great resilience over the last two years, and have continued to further their education, strengthen their job skills, and volunteer to protect their communities all without the certainty of what their future may hold. We are encouraged to see a Dream Act that expands eligibility to include all who were brought to the U.S. as minors and includes a pathway to permanency.

Likewise, recipients of temporary protected status (TPS) continue to prove they are a necessary part of our communities. They have U.S. born children, have mortgages, participate in the workforce, and contribute to the national economy. Collectively, TPS beneficiaries from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti alone have over 273,200 US-born children. Without a protected immigration status, these families will be forced to make desperate decisions. Thus, the American Promise Act and Venezuela TPS Act would provide necessary relief for hundreds of thousands of families facing the threat of losing their legal protections and their ability to provide for their loved ones.

These young people and families are an intrinsic piece of our modern American story, and we believe that Congress has the responsibility to ensure their safety and well-being. Collectively, Dreamers and TPS recipients have nearly 500,000 U.S. citizen children. As an organization that advocates for the health of all children living in the United States, we believe that it is in the best interests of these children to be free from the toxic fear of being separated from their parents and loved ones.

We urge you to vote in favor of the bills before you, while opposing amendments that would increase criminalization and expand criminal bars to eligibility. We cannot continue to use vulnerable populations as bargaining chips for misguided enforcement priorities that give way to racial profiling and allow for innocent young people to be caught in anti-immigrant rhetoric. We are hopeful that today's markup will host a bipartisan conversation about the need for a more inclusive and rewarding immigration system that takes-into-account the best interests of children impacted by immigration enforcement policies.