

March 13, 2013

## **An Open Letter to President Obama and to All Members of Congress**

We, the undersigned immigrants' rights, civil rights, and faith-based organizations, write to strongly urge you to protect and strengthen the family-based immigration system as you develop immigration reform legislation. We believe that all families belong together, regardless of immigration status. Family is a cornerstone of American values but our broken system often hurts families by keeping loved ones apart for years through red tape, bureaucracy, and harsh enforcement tactics.

As of November 2012, nearly *4.3 million* loved ones are waiting in the family visa backlogs. Mexico has the largest backlog with more than 1.3 million close family members in line. Family members from Asian countries – the top four being the Philippines, India, Vietnam and mainland China – also face devastatingly long wait times, with more than 1.8 million loved ones combined waiting abroad for the chance to reunite. Some family members have been waiting years, even decades, to be reunited with their family in America. Forcing families to live apart for years and even decades is simply un-American. Imagine living apart from your spouse, daughter, son, or brother and sister for years, decades even.

Strengthening the current family-based immigration system is good for our economy and is commonsense policy for the United States. A robust family-based immigration has significant economic benefits, especially for long-term economic growth of the United States. Family-based immigrants foster innovation and development of new businesses, particularly small and medium-sized businesses that would not otherwise exist, creating jobs for American workers and raising revenues for our recovering economy. Families also provide support and care for young children and the elderly, allowing others to focus on building the businesses and contributing to American society

Our American values have been and should continue to be rooted in a strong family-based system. We strongly oppose any efforts to further limit the definition of family and believe U.S. citizens deserve to be able to continue to sponsor their siblings and married children for legal permanent residence. Our country has had a long history of reuniting families, who are looking for new and prosperous opportunities in the U.S. An immigration system that truly reflects our nation's values must be inclusive by recognizing that strong families create a much-needed foundation for our communities and our economy to grow and succeed.

We urge you to support commonsense solutions to improve and strengthen our family-based immigration system to help reunite American family members.

Sincerely,

Arab American Institute

Asian American Institute, member of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice

Asian American Justice Center, member of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice

ASISTA Immigration Assistance

American Immigration Council  
American Immigration Lawyers Association  
American Jewish Committee  
Asian Law Caucus, member of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice  
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO  
Asian Pacific American Legal Center, member of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations  
America's Voice Educational Fund  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF)  
BPSOS  
Border Action Network  
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network  
Center for Community Change  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)  
Causa, Oregon's Immigrant Rights Organization  
Church World Service  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society)  
Hmong National Development  
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC)  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
NAPAFASA  
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum  
National CAPACD  
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)  
NALEO Educational Fund  
National Immigration Forum  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)  
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance  
OneAmerica  
OCA- Asian Pacific American Advocates  
PICO National Network  
Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN)  
Sojourners  
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)  
Service Employees International Union  
Southern Poverty Law Center

The Center for APA Women  
The Episcopal Church  
The National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA)  
United Auto Workers  
United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society  
United We Dream  
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)  
Women's Refugee Commission