

National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

June 20, 2018

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: NHLA Opposition to H.R. 6136, Border Security and Immigration Reform Act of 2018

Dear Representative:

We write on behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of the leading national Latino nonpartisan civil rights and advocacy organizations, to express our strong opposition to H.R. 6136, the Border Security and Immigration Reform Act. In the face of an unconscionable policy by the current administration to separate families at the border that are seeking asylum, this bill continues to push forward a fervently anti-Latino and anti-immigrant agenda. This legislation does not represent the values and needs of the Latino community. **NHLA will closely monitor this matter for inclusion in future NHLA scorecards evaluating Member support for the Latino community, including any votes on this measure.**

President Trump created a crisis when he rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, upending the lives of DACA holders and many more DACA-eligible young people. Now, this president and his Administration created a humanitarian crisis with the implementation of its “zero tolerance” policy. Instead of strong congressional leadership, we are met with legislation that caves to the White House’s extremism.

The limited protection it provides to DACA-eligible people falls far short of what the Latino community demands from our Congress, and even falls short of what the President previously proposed. In exchange, this legislation would restrict the ability of U.S. citizens to reunite with parents, siblings, or adult children, fundamentally shifting our immigration system in profound ways to a “merit-based” system. In addition, it would provide \$23 billion in taxpayer dollars to build the President’s wasteful border wall and further militarize the Southern border with 50,000 additional border patrol agents.

It includes a number of troubling proposals to: expand the criminalization of immigrants, increase the categorization of young immigrants as gang members, eliminate certain family-based visas categories, further entrench the use of Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainers, create a private right of action for victims or relatives of a crime when the perpetrator was an immigrant released in a jurisdiction that limits local interaction with federal immigration enforcement, allow the Secretary of Homeland Security to unilaterally declare a country as a “safe third country,” and roll back protections for unaccompanied or other vulnerable children.

Perhaps most telling of the moment we are in, this bill does nothing to address the cruelty of this Administration on the border right now. It does not have any provisions to end the separation of families on the border, other than to codify the increased and continued practice of holding families in detention. The answer to this Trump-created problem cannot be to sanction the detention of families. Furthermore, this bill will make it even more difficult to seek asylum in this country by heightening the standard for initial credible fear interviews. This type of legislation leaves children and families in greater danger while failing to appreciate the moral imperative we have to protect the most marginalized in our society.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alianza Americas
American G.I. Forum
ASPIRA Association
Avance Inc.
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network
Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
Farmworker Justice
Green Latinos
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic National Bar Association
Inter-University Program for Latino Research
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
League of United Latin American Citizens
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
Mi Familia Vota
National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
National Association of Hispanic Publications
National Day Laborer Organizing Network
NALEO Educational Fund
National Association of Latino Independent Producers
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Environmental Council
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Institute for Latino Policy
National Latina/o Psychological Association
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
Presente.org
SER Jobs for Progress National
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
UnidosUS
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
U.S.- Mexico Foundation
Voto Latino

By not standing up for those seeking protection and the young children being scarred in the furtherance of the “zero tolerance” policy, this Administration is carrying out, Congressional leaders are failing the American public. Congress must act to end this horrific policy, to protect the DACA holders and TPS holders that have been abandoned by this Administration, and to ensure each individual is afforded basic human rights in our borders. It must also reject any legislation that advances a fringe white nationalist agenda.

We urge you to oppose H.R. 6136, the Border Security and Immigration Reform Act of 2018.

Please contact NHLA through Andrea Senteno, of MALDEF, at asenteno@maldef.org, or Laura Esquivel, of Hispanic Federation, at lesquivel@hispanicfederation.org, with any questions regarding this issue. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Saenz
MALDEF, President and General Counsel
NHLA Chair and Immigration Committee Co-Chair



Jose Calderon
Hispanic Federation, President
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair