

January 13, 2015

Dear Representative Conyers:

On behalf of the First Focus Campaign for Children (FFCC), a bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, I write to express our strong opposition to “The Department of Homeland Security Fiscal Year 2015 Appropriations Act” (H.R. 240), introduced by Rep. Hal Rogers (R-KY). This funding bill includes several amendments that directly attack children and families by putting them at risk of deportation.

The FFCC has long advocated for both the DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform that would provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented youth and families. Given the lack of progress by Congress, we have also advocated for executive action to halt the devastating separation of families due to deportation. We oppose the amendments attached to this bill that seek to prohibit funds or fees to be used for the new Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) program as well as continuation and expansion of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

The amendment to H.R. 240 by Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) would prohibit funds or fees for the continuation and expansion of the DACA, a program that has already benefitted hundreds of thousands of immigrant youth who entered the U.S. as children by enabling them to work legally, freely pursue their education, obtain drivers licenses, and better contribute to our society. Not only would this prevent any other youth from accessing the program, but it would also put current DACA-beneficiaries at risk for deportation.

The amendment to H.R. 240 by Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-AL) would prohibit funds or fees for the new DAPA program that would provide relief from deportation and work authorization to parents of U.S. citizens and lawfully permanent residents (LPRs). This new program has the potential to improve the lives of up to 4.5 million U.S. citizen children currently living in mixed-status families. Research shows that a parent’s deportation, or simply the fear alone of a parent being deported, can harm children’s mental and physical health and overall well-being. Research also documents that a parent’s undocumented status can impede their child’s healthy development as undocumented parents are less able to access stable employment or critical resources for their children. The DAPA program would provide parents with work authorization and temporary reprieve from deportation, enabling them to better provide and care for their children.

In conclusion, we believe these amendments to H.R. 240 are not only reckless and misguided, but they also undermine our American values and do nothing to fix our immigration system. A vote in favor H.R. 240 with these amendments will be scored for our Champion for Children scorecard as a vote against children. Rather than attempt to block the recent Executive immigration actions and maintain a status quo that harms children and tears families apart, we urge the House of Representatives to move forward with a funding bill that will allow the Department of Homeland Security to fulfill its mission. We also urge policymakers on both sides of the aisle to work together to advance immigration reform that would provide a permanent solution for immigrant children and families.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lesley

President