

March 24, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

As people of diverse faith traditions, we come to you with urgency, knowing that the COVID-19 crisis profoundly impacts already marginalized groups in society including Black, Latino, indigenous, immigrant, and refugee communities.

Members of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition respectfully request that you include a pathway to citizenship for essential immigrant workers and their families, Dreamers, and TPS holders in the upcoming infrastructure and jobs package the Biden administration will be unveiling as the Build Back Better package. Inclusive relief, which recognizes the dignity of all, should be prioritized, and any proposal should not exclude our immigrant neighbors based on interactions with our nation's racist criminal justice system.

Essential workers have faced the most significant risks amid the pandemic. And we know that countless immigrant members of our congregations, places of worship, and communities have worked throughout the pandemic as essential workers, providing the basic goods and critical services which have helped us all make it through this terrible season.

And yet, we as a people have treated our immigrant "essential" workers as expendable, as exploitable - extracting their labor while disregarding their humanity. We have excluded them from full citizenship and denied them the full fruits of their contributions to our economy and community life.

Six million immigrant workers in our communities are at the frontlines of keeping us all healthy and fed during the COVID-19 pandemic. While making up only 17% of about 156 million working people, immigrants are disproportionately represented in COVID-19 front line occupations and essential industries, including being:

- 30% of agriculture workers,
- 37% of meatpackers,
- 17% of the health care and social services industry,
- 18% of the essential retail and wholesale industry, which includes groceries, pharmacies, and gas stations; and
- 26% of the manufacturing industry, which includes food, medicine, soap/cleaning agents.

Many of the doctors, nurses, researchers, and other health workers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response are immigrants, and they are caring for the sick in our communities. Many of the farmworkers and meatpackers maintaining our food supply are undocumented, and they are keeping us fed. Immigrants, including around 131,000 TPS holders and 200,000 DACA recipients, are serving on the frontlines—despite their families and communities receiving little or no relief themselves. Not only are they risking their own lives, but they are risking exposing their family members and loved ones to the virus in order to continue working and serving communities across the nation.

Essential immigrant workers have been, and will continue to be, key to all communities' health and safety during the pandemic and will be critical for the country's economic recovery. One important step we can take in the coming weeks is to recognize undocumented immigrants who are essential workers and their families for the gifts they bring into their communities, their resiliency, and their contributions to our society with a roadmap to citizenship. We must not exclude some people from relief, keep them in limbo, or punish them twice for having prior contact with a racist and biased criminal legal system.

After four years of attacks on our communities, the Trump administration's immigration policies, and a year at the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Biden Administration and Congress can and must secure a pathway to citizenship for Essential Workers immediately and as part of an economic recovery package. We demand legalization be attached to COVID-19 relief and passed in reconciliation. Our national response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shamefully failed to include and guarantee immigrants' access to economic relief, access to testing and treatment, and equitable access to vaccines. We lament the disproportionate and inequitable impact of the virus on our communities of color and immigrant communities and call on the Biden administration and Congress to act now. We must include protections for immigrant workers to secure our nation's health and lay the foundation for an equitable economic recovery.

As you continue to work on assembling this long-overdue economic recovery and jobs package, we urge you to seize this opportunity and include a pathway to citizenship for essential immigrant workers, Dreamers, and TPS holders, as well as their families. In doing so, we can take a step toward the state of "right relationship" we seek with our Creator, our neighbors, and all of creation.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please contact Peniel Ibe at pibe@afsc.org and Elissa Diaz at ediaz@cwsglobal.org with any questions.

Sincerely,
Peniel Ibe and Elissa Diaz
Co-Chairs, Interfaith Immigration Coalition