

November 30, 2022

**Open Letter To**

President Joseph R. Biden  
Vice President Kamala Harris  
U.S. House of Representatives  
U.S. Senate

Dear Honorable Sirs and Madams:

The following 24 national/international, 5 regional, and 13 state/local organizations urge Congress to preserve language included in the draft Senate omnibus bill, directing the Department of Homeland Security to establish a centralized process whereby people who were deported can apply for an opportunity to return to their families, homes, jobs, and communities.

Fatima Sow's husband was deported by President Trump. She wrote: "My six year-old son always asks why all his friends are with their dads, but not him. During parent teacher conferences he said that his friends come with their Dads [and he is] the only one without a Dad and he always asks me why. He misses him."

This little boy deserves to grow up with his father by his side, not thousands of miles away.

Permanent banishment from one's home, family, job, and community is an extreme consequence for an immigration visa problem, or contact with the criminal legal system. But for most people, that is exactly what deportation is: lifetime separation from their families and the lives they built over years, even decades.

Our demand echoes calls from Senator Booker, Senator Brown, and other U.S. senators as well as Rep. Mondaire Jones and twenty-six other members of Congress.

We also recognize the following truths:

**The human costs of deportation are profound and preventable.** Families have become housing and food insecure due to a parent's deportation. Children have become depressed—even suicidal—due to a parent's deportation. They have been forced into the child welfare system, or made to leave their schools, friends, and communities and move to a country they do not know, all because of a parent's deportation.

**The stress of a parent's deportation can scar children for life.** As child psychology experts and researchers wrote in an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court, "this level of stress can interfere with young children's physical brain development, altering how they learn and their ability to manage their emotions. It can also lead to physical and mental health problems that last into adulthood."

**Deportation destroys other hallmarks of a healthy society.** Loving marriages have collapsed under the financial and emotional strain of detention and deportation. Businesses closed and employees have been laid off because of the owner's deportation. The devastating ripple effect of deportation goes on and on. And, it is entirely preventable.

**Many people lose their asylum cases and are deported to danger because of racism and other systemic flaws in U.S. immigration courts.** They didn't lose because their cases are without merit, they lose because the system is designed to fail in so many ways. They deserve safety, not a plane ticket back to their persecutors—or a place where they will be targeted because of their ties to the United States.

**Many deported people have paths to legal immigration status through a family member, employer sponsor, or as survivors of crime, trafficking, labor, or other abuses.** Some administrations allowed people to stay in the U.S. and pursue those paths. The Trump administration deported them.

**It doesn't have to be this way.** The Biden administration can make different choices. It has the power to ease barriers so that deported people can come home.

Deported people and their families tell us they feel like “ghosts” in the U.S. immigration discussion. But they are real. They have love, lives, hopes, and dreams. And sometimes it's a simple dream: just to be together as a family or return to the lives they once led.

Reunifying families and communities is a transformative act that could be a powerful part of the Biden administration's legacy.

Respectfully,

### **International and National Organizations**

African Communities Together
African Immigration Initiative of the Courageous Resistance of the Desert
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
Cameroon Advocacy Network
Center for Law and Social Policy
Comunidad Maya Pixan Ixim
Deported Asylum Seekers Assistance Project
Franciscan Action Network
Global Social Work, LLC

Haitian Bridge Alliance
Hispanic Federation
NAHRA, the Nicaraguan American Human Rights Alliance
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Project (NIPNLG)
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Otros Dreams en Acción (ODA)
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
The Rhizome Center for Migrants
UndocuBlack Network
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Voice for Refuge Action Fund
Witness at the Border
Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights

## **U.S. Regional Organizations**

Adelanto Visitation Advocacy Network & Immigrant Services (AVANIS) (based in CA)
CAIR-Pittsburgh (based in PA)
Heartfelt Tidbits (based in OH)
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC) (serving IL, NJ, NY, PA, TX)
NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic (based in NY)

## **State/Local Organizations**

CAIR-Ohio	Ohio
Cleveland Jobs with Justice	Ohio
Dorothy Day House, Washington DC	DC
Florida Immigrant Coalition	Florida
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas	Texas

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights	Illinois
Immigrant Defense Project	New York
InterReligious Task Force on Central America	Ohio
Justice Seeking Committee of Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church	Ohio
Latino Health Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati	Ohio
Ohio Immigrant Alliance	Ohio
SBN Consulting	Ohio
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center	New Jersey