

Written Statement of Ramon Canaba, Jr.
Retired Supervisory Immigration Enforcement Agent, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship
Hearing "Why Don't They Just Get in Line?' Barriers to Legal Immigration"

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Thank you Subcommittee Chairwoman Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Ranking Member Tom McClintock (R-CA), and members of the House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship for this opportunity to submit this written statement in support of the American Families United Act, which would address barriers to legal immigration for spouses and children of U.S. citizens. I would especially like to thank my Congresswoman, Representative Veronica Escobar, for introducing this bill.

My name is Ramon Canaba, Jr. I'm a retired SIEA (Supervisory Immigration Enforcement Agent), Immigration and Customs Enforcement. I started with Border Patrol and retired with ICE at the mandatory retirement age of 57 years. I served for 31 years in total and was detailed to many branches of the service. My duties included processing immigrant visas, processing refugees/asylum applicants, inspections, supporting prosecutions, processing detentions, and carrying out removals. I was also an immigration law instructor at the Academy in Glynco, Georgia.

With the Patrol, I witnessed that immigration laws are very tough and have teeth, but most situations allow for waivers. I often encountered two broad waivers at our ports of entry: the I-212 (d)(4)(a) waiver of entry documents, which applies to humanitarian, public interest, and business applicants that are entering the US for business-related or special purposes; and the I-212 (d)(5)(a), which applies to criminal proceedings.

Immigration law should allow the immigration service to apply this principle to every case that presents itself, including when petitioning/applying for a spouse or children of a US citizen. The limited waivers available in these cases are granted in cases of "extreme hardship," but in my experience, the process is so difficult for a US citizen that the financial and emotional toll cause the very hardship that the process is meant to evaluate. US citizens cannot even live together while their applicant spouse gathers the required documents supporting the issue at hand.

Other times, applications for the spouse or child of a US citizen are denied without recourse to a waiver. I have seen good people, including those working for federally supported programs, forced to relocate to the other side of the border, where they and their families become targets for drug cartels. I place myself in their shoes and think about the anguish and hardship they have to go through each and every day, just because our laws do not support their need to live with their families in the United States of America.

My opinion on the *American Families United Act* is very strong. I believe that each and every case should be closely reviewed by immigration officers. Quality inspectors should have the leeway to review the application at hand. Adjudicators should be able to weigh the facts in favor of approval/disapproval and make decisions as soon as possible. Congress needs to consider that these applicants have very little resources, have commitments with their employers, and very little time to see the process through.

Thank you for letting me share my thoughts and input on this important bill. I urge Congress and the President to pass it into law.

Yours in Service,

Ray Canaba