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CENTRAL AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER / CENTRO DE RECURSOS CENTROAMERICANOS

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ADMINISTRATIVE RELIEF MEASURES A STEP FORWARD, BUT MANY ARE LEFT WITHOUT PROTECTION

(November 20, 2014, Los Angeles) – CARECEN supports, as a good first step, the immigration administrative relief measures announced today by President Obama, including deportation deferral that could help the parents of legal residents and U.S. Citizens, as many as 5 million people, come out of the shadows and contribute even more the U.S. economy. However, we also recognize that the struggle for meaningful and fair reform continues.

“Many in our community have worked hard to advocate for protections against deportation and today’s announcement is because of their struggle,” said Martha Arévalo, Executive Director of CARECEN Los Angeles. “We now have to ensure that we are ready to inform and assist the community through this process. But we cannot forget those who are being excluded from this program, including those in detention. Our goal has always been to reform this country’s broken immigration system so that it’s fair and focuses on keeping families together, and not on further militarization of the southern border. We will continue to work for meaningful reform that will protect the millions of people who are undocumented.”

According to the announcement, parents of U.S. Citizens and lawful permanent residents qualify for deportation relief and work authorization if they have been in the U.S. at least since January 1, 2010, as do people who arrived in the U.S. before that date if they were not yet 16 years old. Applicants will have to register, pass criminal and national security background checks, show that they paid their taxes, and pay a fee. Prospective beneficiaries will have to wait until early 2015 to apply.

The President said recent undocumented arrivals will be priorities for deportation and will not qualify for relief. Also, those who commit fraud will not be able to apply.

Many thousands of others languish in detention or remain here with only conditional status, such as the Temporary Protective Status that Salvadoran, Honduran and Nicaraguan refugees of civil wars won more than 15 years ago. They have not been able to move on to permanent residency because there has been no appetite in Congress to take on substantive immigration reform.

“This is one of the most important the civil rights issues of our time,” said Ángela Sanbrano, CARECEN Board Chair. “Now is the time to look at what we really want our immigration policies to achieve.”

CARECEN also wants to ensure the community is careful and does not fall victim to unscrupulous *notarios* and unlicensed immigration consultants who take advantage of people’s hopes for legal status. Applicants should steer clear of those who charge high fees simply to apply to the program. CARECEN has scheduled a *charla* (workshop) at noon Saturday, November 22, at 2845 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, CA 90005, to give an analysis of what the plan provides, who it benefits, and what remains outside of it.

CARECEN has worked for 31 years to protect the rights and dignity of Central American and Latino immigrants in Southern California. Since its founding in 1983, when thousands of Central Americans were fleeing the brutality of civil war, CARECEN has worked to change unjust immigration policies, win legal status for immigrants, and foster community activism on issues such as education reform, workers and immigrant rights, economic justice and community strengthening.

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