



National Network for Arab American Communities

A project of ACCESS

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

August 19, 2014

Dear President Obama:

The National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC) remains deeply concerned and frustrated by the lack of progress on immigration reform in Congress. NNAAC is a national consortium of 23 Arab American organizations in 11 states. We have worked tirelessly for over a decade to pass real and comprehensive immigration reform, only to watch it fail multiple times in the House. **We cannot wait any longer and must work to alleviate the pain and suffering of immigrant families.** Our communities are looking for concrete action. With over 1000 deportations a day, many of our communities feel the painful effects of our broken immigration system on a daily basis and live in fear of their families being broken apart. The time is now to forge ahead and do the right thing.

NNAAC is encouraged by your recent announcement explaining the consideration of an executive order for immediate relief measures, regardless of Congress' inaction. We urge you to not delay this matter any further and provide real relief to our community members and millions across the country.

Our community is like any other community. Some of us have been here for generations and others are newly arrived immigrants. Your immediate action directly impacts our communities. It is for this reason that we join national allies to call on you to do whatever is in your power to bring relief for millions of people, including Arab immigrants.

We ask that your immediate plan be based on these principles:

- **Provide Relief to Aspiring New Americans**

Recognizing that the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants are critical to our society and economy, we strongly urge you to provide the broadest relief available under the law, and provide work authorization to as many families and workers as possible. At the very least, we ask that you consider granting deferred action and work authorization to individuals who have demonstrated continuous presence, family ties or employment in the United States.

- **Support Civil Rights and End Unjust Deportations**

We ask that you take immediate action to end the deportations and detentions that are tearing families apart each day. We specifically ask that you narrow our current overly broad removal priorities to implement more humane and cost-effective alternatives to detention. This should include community-based supervision programs, the expansions of prosecutorial discretion and parental interest memos to all DHS agencies, restrictions on the issuance of detainers on individuals with no criminal history, and an end to the Secure Communities Program and other collaboration programs between federal immigration enforcement and local agencies.

- **Keep Families and Communities Together and Reunite Families**

We urge you to keep families and communities together by broadening the use of parole and waivers. We recommend the expansion of “parole in place” for undocumented immigrants who are immediate relatives of U.S. citizens and Legal Permanent Residents, family members of DACA recipients, and those immediate relatives of citizens or permanent residents outside of the U.S. In addition, we ask that you clarify that family and/or community ties in the U.S. are included in the “extreme hardship” requirements and that you expand the “stateside waiver” category to all waiver applicants, to allow more families to stay together.

We also ask you to clear the years-old backlogs and expand the number of family reunification visas.

- **Stop Enforcement Abuses**

We ask that you take action to reform enforcement practices to ensure the law is carried out in a manner that promotes public safety and upholds due process and civil and human rights. We ask that you limit the use of summary removals, ensure in-person hearings before immigration judges, guarantee workers can assert their labor rights without fear of deportations, and provide transparent information about where individuals are being detained. In addition, we urge you to address the “use of force” practices by Border Patrol and ICE agents by requiring these agents to wear body-worn cameras to increase accountability and reduce incidents of abuse. Finally, we ask you to roll back the Border Patrol’s claim of 100-mile warrantless authority to address concerns over civil liberties violations and focus Border Patrol’s efforts on the actual border.

NNAAC is committed and will continue to work on long-term legislation to fix our broken immigration system. We will not give up; however, **we call on you, Mr. President, to use your executive powers immediately to restore fairness and accountability to enforcement operations.** Ensuring an aggressive administrative relief program means families and communities across the country will no longer have to live in fear. You made a promise to our communities that you will do everything you can to fix our broken immigration system – and this bold plan may be your last opportunity to do so.

Sincerely,



Nadia Tordova

Director, National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)

NNAAC Member Organizations:

Arab Cultural and Community Center (San Francisco, CA) ♦ Access California Services (Anaheim, CA) ♦ Arab Film Festival (San Francisco, CA) ♦ Levantine Cultural Center in Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA) ♦ Somali Community Services (San Jose, CA) ♦ Center for Arabic Culture (Somerville, MA) ♦ ACCESS (Dearborn, MI) ♦ Arab American Heritage Council (Flint, MI) ♦ American Syrian Arab Cultural Association (Flint, MI) ♦ Alwan for the Arts (New York, NY) ♦ The Arab American Family Support Center (Brooklyn, NY) ♦ The American MidEast Leadership Network (Astoria, NY) ♦ Arab American Association of New York (Brooklyn, NY) ♦ ACCESS of Western New York (Lackawanna, NY) ♦ Somali Action Alliance Education Fund (Minneapolis, MN) ♦ The Arab-American Community Center (Orlando, FL) ♦ Alif Institute (Atlanta, GA) ♦ The Arab American Cultural and Community Center (Houston, TX) ♦ Arab American Action Network (Chicago, IL) ♦ Arab American Family Services (Bridgeview, IL) ♦ Arab American Community Center for Economic and Social Services (Cleveland, OH) ♦ Philadelphia Arab American Community Development Corporation (Philadelphia, PA) ♦ Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture (Philadelphia, PA)