

Congressional Testimony

House Judiciary Committee

“America's Immigration System: Opportunities for Legal Immigration and Enforcement of Laws against Illegal Immigration”

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Introduction and Thanks

Chairman Goodlatte, Ranking Member Conyers, and distinguished members of the United States House Judiciary Committee, my name is Dr. Puneet Arora, and I am honored to provide the following testimony on behalf of Immigration Voice and the roughly half million highly skilled foreign professionals and their families waiting for permanent residence in America. I thank you deeply for your time and attention to the issue of US immigration, not just for me and those like me, but for our American economy, our domestic workforce, and our current and future U.S. business owners.

Immigration Voice is a national grassroots non-profit organization of over 70,000 active, highly skilled foreign professionals living in America. In December of 2005, Immigration Voice was founded by Aman Kapoor with a simple goal in mind: create awareness around highly skilled immigration and the benefits to the United States of expanded and accelerated opportunities for permanent residence. To that end, Immigration Voice has met with countless legislators, agency personnel, and administration officials in Washington, DC and around the country in an effort to both educate and better understand the system we utilize for green cards. I became involved with Immigration Voice in 2006 and I am now Vice President. Our membership has grown significantly to include highly skilled foreign professionals across the spectrum of countries and specialties, most of whom are still in the process of receiving their green cards, with the rest lawful permanent residents or U.S. citizens who are motivated from their own experiences to help others.

A single concept connects all the members of our coalition: we view ourselves as future Americans. We want nothing more than to participate in the U.S. economy freely—to start businesses and change jobs without the fear of harassment or punitive measures, such as starting over in the green card line. Above all else, we want the roots we have laid in America to take hold permanently. All of us already live and work in the United States. Many of us have children that are American citizens by birth. We earn good salaries, and we pay our taxes. We create opportunities for employment and invent valuable products for U.S. companies to sell in America and around the world. We are not asking for thanks. We simply want a real place in America—a permanent place that allows us to live and invest freely, obtain a driver's license in a reasonable time, apply for insurance, and qualify for a mortgage based on our merits as applicants. We want our children to have the opportunities they deserve and not to have to start from scratch in the immigration line.

Describing life in the employment-based green card backlog is my primary purpose in testifying before you today, but I also want to help you better understand what motivates highly skilled foreign professionals who choose the US as their home—the personal goals and ambitions of a group of future Americans you commonly refer to by nonimmigrant terms like H-1bs, Ls, NIWs, and TNs. We are more than letters, numbers, job titles, and prized economic statistics. We are dedicated individuals with real lives, real families, and a real desire to be of value, economically and morally, to this country. We are job creators for our American colleagues—according to the American Enterprise Institute, each of us who are U.S. educated in STEM create an average of 2.6 American jobs, and foreign-born professionals generally are 30% more likely to start a U.S. business than are our native-born counterparts.

Foreign born workers are a cornerstone of nation's health and economic security. A study by the Partnership for a New American Economy found that 40% of the Fortune 500 companies were founded in whole or in part by immigrants to America or their children. These immigrants came from all walks of life, but they share one thing in common. Not one of them could have started their business today without a green card or the help from a U.S. citizen. This is the great opportunity cost we face. Every day that highly skilled foreign professionals live without green cards is one more day they are not starting new companies, creating new jobs, or building permanent roots in their communities through home ownership and local investments. In describing the half-life lived by those in the employment-based backlog, I hope to shed an important light on the highly skilled foreign professionals who have already given a large portion of their adult existence to the U.S. economy and who continue to wait for their turn to fully live the American dream.

My American Story

I was born in New Delhi, India in 1972. My home town was a large metropolitan national capital city. From the earliest memories I can recall, I always had an interest in science. Through my years in school, I participated in science symposia and won awards on numerous occasions for my presentations, including a prestigious young astronomer award. As a teenager, I was recognized with a gold medal by the Department of Biotechnology for the Government of India and given a 3 year scholarship for ranking among the top 10 biology students in the country. In 1989, I was awarded a rare perfect score on the biology portion of the national high school exit examinations.

India was a growing economy even then, but the opportunities for advancement were very limited by U.S. standards. Placement at top Universities was extremely competitive. Entrance to medical school meant taking extensive and rigorous examinations with very low rates of acceptance. My only option was to study hard, and through dedicated efforts, I was accepted to India's flagship medical college, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi, the top medical college in the country every single year since surveys have existed in India. Admission was based on an entrance test that is now taken by nearly 100,000 candidates, all competing then for 34 positions open to all comers, an acceptance rate of less than 0.01%.

After obtaining my medical degree, I reached a crossroads. I knew I would continue to post graduate residency training in Internal Medicine, but I did not know where. Driven by a desire to see the world and obtain advanced medical training in the West, I applied for graduate positions in the United States. In 1996, I was fortunate to be accepted to a post graduate medical residency program at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine in Springfield and thus began my journey to America and through the odyssey known generally as the highly skilled immigration system.

I entered the U.S. immigration system on a J-1 exchange visa, which is commonly used for post graduate medical training. It seems appropriate at this point to clarify that highly skilled immigrants enter the U.S. directly on many types of visas. My colleagues at Immigration Voice almost all began their journey to green card on educational and/or temporary employment visas such as the H-1b. As the name suggests, these visas are meant to be used for short periods of time, and with that in mind, certain

important restrictions apply to the employment of immigrants on these visas. These restrictions and regulations are the heart of the problem for highly skilled immigrants seeking permanent residence, and because of “Per Country Limits” (an issue with which this committee is very familiar). This is especially true for those immigrants from India, China, South Korea, the Philippines, and Mexico, the countries that supply the vast majority of our highly skilled, highly educated foreign talent.

After completing my residency in 1999, I was offered a fellowship in Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism at the New York University School of Medicine, which I gladly accepted, thus moving from the land of Lincoln to one of the world’s greatest cities, where I worked the next 2 years at Bellevue Hospital and the VA Medical Center. In 2003 I began a fellowship in Advanced Diabetes at the Mayo Clinic and Graduate School in Rochester, MN, the greatest center for Endocrinology in the country and perhaps the world. This was a dream come true. My educational journey ended with my second American Board certification in Endocrinology in 2001—my first had been in Internal Medicine in 1999. For good measure, I also certified as a physician nutrition specialist and earned a Masters of Biomedical Sciences in Clinical Research from the Mayo Graduate School in 2005.

From 1996 to 2003, I remained on a J-1 visa. Although I have heard far worse stories from my colleagues at Immigration Voice, my own experience on the J-1 was mostly uneventful barring the constant need to renew my the visa and obtain a special stamp on every visit to my native country. Despite its common use by students in advanced medical programs of 2 to 3 years in duration, the J-1 visa is designed by law to expire annually. The underlying condition of the visa stipulated that I must either return to my home country for a period of 2 years after my training or obtain a waiver based on service for a period of 3 years in a medically underserved area of the United States or its territories. From a visa perspective, I was fortunate that my medical interest aligned with the latter of the two options. As an endocrinologist and diabetologist, my area of professional interest encompasses a growing and emergent public health problem with a current and projected shortage of trained medical professionals. I was thus able to qualify for a waiver.

Not every foreign STEM student is so fortunate. Under both F-1 and J-1 visas, foreign students being trained in our top universities are told that they cannot at any time declare their intent to remain in the U.S. beyond their education—in immigration speak, this is called a prohibition on “dual intent”. I clearly remember thinking at the time that I am getting the best education in the world at the best U.S. Universities; half the people in my classes are foreign born and are also receiving top training; when we graduate, the fastest growing industries in America will eagerly recruit us, because they cannot find all the workers they need domestically—and the U.S. government is telling us to tell these U.S. employers we plan to use our skills somewhere other than America.

My professional life began in 2003, when I entered clinical practice with Health Partners Medical Group in St. Paul, MN, at the Regions Hospital, formerly Ramsey County Medical Center, and its adjoining clinics, having obtained a J-1 waiver and an H-1b visa with the support of the State of Minnesota under the Conrad 30 program. Regions Hospital being a major teaching hospital for the University of Minnesota Medical School, I took up significant teaching and mentoring responsibilities in addition to my regular physician duties and was appointed Assistant Professor of Medicine.

As a practicing physician in a medically underserved area with a substantial population of indigent patients, I qualified for a National Interest Waiver, putting me on a clear path towards a green card. I was elated. My dream of permanent residency seemed on track and within reach in a few years. However, I soon learned that USCIS had adopted an excessively restrictive interpretation of the 2001 NIW statute that prohibited favorable consideration of my application. It took a lawsuit brought by other immigrants and their benefactors to overturn the agency decision in 2007, finally breaking the logjam and allowing me to file for and receive the National Interest Waiver for which I should have qualified years before.

In late 2008, I was offered an opportunity to return to my clinical research roots as a Clinical Research Medical Director at Amgen, the world's largest biotechnology company that discovers, develops, manufactures, and delivers innovative human therapeutics and is dedicated to helping people fight serious illness. Even with my National Interest Waiver, I was only able to accept this offer again due to fortunate circumstances. Because of a quirk in the visa bulletin posted July of 2007, the Department of State kindly allowed all those in line for a green card to file for adjustment of status for a limited window of 1 month. This adjustment provided me with the opportunity to gain work authorization, without which the restrictions on transferring my H-1b work visa would have meant a year's wait before I could accept Amgen's offer—assuming I was lucky enough to be selected in the H-1b lottery, and assuming they were willing to wait that long. Without this very brief window of relief, it is doubtful my employer and I would have been able to come together to our mutual benefit.

As for my family, people often overlook the fact that many highly skilled immigrants are accompanied to America by highly educated spouses. Over the last decade and a half, my wife completed both a MEd and PhD in Education from Vanderbilt University and the University of Minnesota respectively. She has taught at the Mayo High School in Rochester, MN, and worked with Oxfam on grassroots education initiatives. She has contributed toward writing, updating, and revising a textbook for teacher education, volunteered significant time to the local public schools and consulted for educational technology start-ups.

Another commonly overlooked fact is that because highly skilled immigrants typically live in the U.S. on nonimmigrant visas for years—over a decade if you happen to be from India and China—many of our children are born U.S. citizens even while we are not. We now have 2 young daughters, both born in the United States. We have lived here for nearly 17 years, and call America our home. My green card application meanwhile collected dust somewhere deep in bowels of the U.S. immigration system, where it was swallowed up years ago only to emerge about a year ago for approval—then too due to a temporary move forward in adjustment dates brought about by the weak economy. Those dates have since gone significantly backwards by several years and had I not been fortunate in 2011, I would still be waiting for my turn. I will dedicate the rest of my testimony to explaining in greater detail why this was the case for me and remains the case for so many other immigrants waiting in the employment-based backlog—and what this committee can do to improve our immigration system to the benefit of all current and future Americans.

Employment-based Green Cards are Not H-1bs

Before we discuss numbers, the key issue in the employment-based backlog, I want to address a point of confusion among many of your colleagues that persists to this day. For many years, whenever Members of Congress spoke of highly skilled immigrants, they often used the term “H-1b” interchangeably—in much the same way a person might ask for a Kleenex when they mean a tissue or a Coke when they mean a soft drink. Very few policymakers in DC seemed to know anything about the employment-based visa system, and even fewer still could say with any certainty the difference between an H-1b visa and an employment-based green card.

There are probably many reasons for this confusion. During the 1990s tech boom, the U.S. highly skilled industries were growing so fast that U.S. technology companies could hardly keep pace with demand. The decline in STEM education in the U.S. had been well documented since the early 1990s, but the spike in demand for qualified technologists created by the growth of companies like Microsoft, Intel, and Oracle brought home the problem in new ways. The emerging U.S. technology sector needed quick access to tens of thousands of highly skilled immigrants to meet labor shortages in real time. The H-1b, a visa that was designed to respond to fluctuating labor demands in shortage occupations, became the workhorse of this effort and has been closely identified with the emergence of the highly skilled economy and foreign technologists ever since.

The tragic side effect of this generalization is that little attention has been paid to the continuing needs of highly skilled immigrants, primarily employment-based green card applicants. America’s STEM shortage has proved to be anything but temporary. In the early days of the H-1b program, many highly skilled immigrants were kept in their temporary status for several years, as there seemed to be a persistent belief that growth would drive demand for STEM education among U.S. students and foreign workers would no longer be needed. Today, most major U.S. employers file for employment-based green cards for their highly skilled immigrants immediately upon hiring. This is especially pronounced for my colleagues on H-1bs.

The truth is the H-1b program for many highly skilled immigrants—especially from India and China—is a sore subject. My colleagues do not blame the visa. An H-1b was meant to be a temporary work visa, not a placeholder in the green card line. The visa does allow many Immigration Voice members to live and work in America, but the restrictions exact a heavy toll professionally and personally on these immigrants overtime. If there is blame to be placed, it belongs to a singular chokepoint in the green card system, the result primarily in a double backlog due to inadequate numbers and a poorly conceived policy known as per country limits. This committee and the House of Representatives more broadly saw fit to end the per country limits on employment-based green cards in November of 2011 by a vote of 389-15. We are talking today about addressing both aspects of the backlog—the shortage of green cards and per country limits—and that is critical if we are to fully capture the potential of our country’s highly skilled foreign professionals.

I would offer one final thought on misperceptions about our highly skilled immigration system. Even in the early Wild West days of the U.S. tech boom, there was a deep disconnect between what

policymakers believed about highly skilled immigrants and what highly skilled immigrants believed about themselves. For some policymakers, every highly skilled immigrant was Albert Einstein—this I can tell you from personal experience is not true. Others seemed to view all highly skilled immigrants as foreign versions of Bill Gates—strictly interested in making sure “spellcheck” continues to work as you type away on your computer. As you can see from my testimony, I am not a computer scientist or computer engineer. Many highly skilled immigrants are—and for good reason—but a significant number are not. In contrast, highly skilled immigrants see themselves simply as individuals with deeply marketable skills in America’s largest and fastest growing sectors—highly skilled STEM fields. We are well educated, smart, and motivated, but in most cases no more so than our U.S. colleagues. We are not here because we are better than American workers—we are here because there are not enough qualified (a very important distinction) American workers to meet all the specific demands of America’s growing highly skilled industries.

H.R. 3012 and Per Country Limits

On the issue of per country, I must start by thanking you, the members of the House Judiciary Committee. In particular, I want to thank Congressman Jason Chaffetz of Utah, Congressman Lamar Smith of Texas, and Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren of California for your bipartisan efforts to eliminate this unfair, and deeply demoralizing policy. While everyone waits through the uncertainty of the process, a little known fact about the employment-based green card system is that some wait significantly longer than others. As this committee knows, the discrepancy arises from an arbitrary policy decision at the time the employment categories were created that limits the total number of green cards issued to individuals born in any one country to 7%. We can find no policy rationale for this cap other than the same limit exists for the family green card system. In the context of family, such a limit seems to make sense, where social diversity is part of the policy rationale for the system. In contrast, the employment system exists solely to serve the needs of the U.S. economy—economic necessity is in fact the first test for whether or not an individual qualifies for an employment-based green card—they don’t limit you by country until after they determine you add value to America.

As this committee recognized by passing on voice vote H.R. 3012, “The Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act,” the only thing this policy serves to limit is America’s economic potential. If per country limits are left in place, highly skilled immigrants from India will quite literally wait decades, most on temporary visas that limit their job mobility and prevent them from starting businesses, buying homes, and earning two incomes. This is an extremely demoralizing prospect for men and women who come to America believing their skills are valued and welcomed. The problem of waiting—and especially waiting longer than others for no other reason than being born in a populous country—is easily the number one cause of attrition and “brain drain” by our friends and foreign professional colleagues to countries that compete with the United States.

There are entrepreneurs like Kunal Bahl, an engineer from the University of Pennsylvania with an MBA from Wharton, who started a company while in college that now sells to thousands of U.S. stores. The problem is that in 2007, when his H-1b visa ran out, Kunal simply gave up on the U.S. immigration system and sought greener pastures back home in India. Kunal’s company now employs more than

1500 people...in India. While we have few hard statistics on these types of opportunity costs, most immigration experts agree the number of foreign-born workers returning to India and China annually is on the rise and in the tens of thousands. The Chinese Ministry of Education estimates the number of emigrants who returned to China last year was a record 134,800, up 25% from 108,000 in 2009. As many have highlighted, Intel, Google, Yahoo and eBay were all founded by immigrants. Knowing what we know today, would we not do whatever it took to keep these innovators in America?

As I have heard Congressman Chaffetz say on several occasions, per country limits have no place in the employment-based system. Talent is talent no matter where an immigrant is from, and the limitations on access to employment-based green cards are best determined by the needs of the market, not an arbitrary cap. The cap in many ways is the antithesis of the market, enforcing a smooth distribution of talent globally that does not match up with reality. On its face, the idea that a country with billions of people should be limited to the same number of employment-based green cards as a country with only millions is absurd. Again, we thank Mr. Chaffetz, Mr. Smith, and Mrs. Lofgren, as well as the House Judiciary Committee and the full U.S. House of Representatives for recognizing this absurdity and for doing your part to put an end to this unfair policy by passing H.R. 3012 last year. We hope you will take up this bill again early this year.

Green Cards: There's No Getting Around the Numbers

No matter how you approach the problem, if you are for capturing the economic potential stored in the green card backlog—currently trapping hundreds of thousands of America's top highly skilled foreign professionals—the answer is clear: you must increase supply to meet demand. The U.S. immigration system provides 140,000 green cards for employment-based immigrants every year. This accounts for approximately 16% of all green cards awarded annually, a significant number until you look more closely. The reality is many temporary visas, like the H-1b, which is capped at 85,000 visas a year, allow immigrants to enter the country with whole families. However, when the time comes for permanent residence, each member of the family must also receive an employment-based green card. In short, we estimate that more than half of the 140,000 employment-based green cards go to family members. For countries impacted by per country limits like India, China, South Korea, the Philippines, and Mexico, the visa usage by family members does nothing but compound the already extremely long waits, at times causing backlogged individuals to actually move backwards in line—something commonly known in immigration circles as retrogression.

What we find more frustrating is that of the 140,000 green cards provided by Congress annually to the employment-based categories, a significant number have often gone unused despite the excessive demand in the system. We believe this is primarily the result of inefficiencies in the application process which continues to be excessively reliant on paper-based methods. Regardless of the cause, if USCIS and the agencies responsible for overseeing the green card system fail to process applications in time, the allotment of visas expire and are lost. The USCIS ombudsman estimates that between the family and employment-based categories, over 300,000 green cards have been wasted in this manner. We believe this number to be higher and that up to 325,000 thousand have been left unprocessed in the employment-based categories alone. The deeply frustrating aspect of the loss of visas due to

inefficiency is that after years of waiting, the government should have little doubt as to who is next in line (yet another negative consequence of per country limits). Highly skilled immigrants plan their life around the green card process. It should not be too much to ask that the agency take time to plan for effective and efficient green card processing as well.

I cannot repeat it enough. When it comes to the issues in the employment-based system, green card numbers are the single biggest challenge for highly skilled foreign professionals. Combined with per country limits, the inadequate supply of green cards represents a major hurdle to job mobility, professional growth, career advancement, promotions and even the education of our children if not born in the United States. In some cases, young children become adults by the time green cards are available to an applicant's family. In these cases, the adult child is no longer eligible and may find themselves separated from their families for an extended period or even permanently, due to having to start an immigration process of their own, from scratch, despite having lived most of their lives in the United States.

The Path Forward is Open and the Time is Now

Whether you were born in New York or New Delhi, it is easy to see that times are changing with respect to the debate on immigration reform. I have observed since I last visited Congress, that a new energy exists around taking on the issues of our immigration system from a wider scope of interests. There are legitimate views on all sides of the issue, and I know that it will be a difficult task to reach consensus. I can only speak to my experiences and to my knowledge of the system as one who has lived through it. I am not here to advocate for more than what my knowledge tells me are problems common to the experience of all highly skilled foreign professionals in the green backlog. I can say that Immigration voice will continue to support any and all efforts to pass legislation containing much needed improvements to the employment-based green card system that make life in the backlog so difficult for so many of our best foreign professionals.

Whether it is the recently introduced "Immigration Innovation Act of 2013" in the Senate, which we wholeheartedly support, a future highly skilled immigration bill yet to be introduced in the House, or a comprehensive immigration bill containing like provisions, our coalition of more than 70,000 highly skilled foreign professionals will stand firmly behind all efforts that include the following reforms:

1. Eliminate per country limits—as previously discussed, this is as much an issue of fairness as it is an issue of reducing wait times. Currently, highly skilled immigrants from the largest countries in the world bear the full burden of this negative externality. Removal of these caps will distribute wait times among all immigrants, making the system fair as a "first come, first serve" process and alleviating market distorting pressures on Indian and Chinese immigrants stuck for years on temporary visas. This change is a simple, technical fix requiring no additional green card numbers be issued.
2. Recapture previously authorized but unused green card numbers—also, discussed above, recapturing previously authorized but unused green cards will allow Congress to help clear the

employment-based backlog without authorizing any additional visas. These visas were already provided by law, but due in many cases to bureaucratic inefficiencies, they were lost. Recapturing is an option that requires no major changes to the immigration system.

3. Raise the employment-based green card cap to 290,000 visas per year—raising the cap on employment-based green cards is the most obvious solution to the employment-based problem. While this option may be the least politically acceptable to some in Congress, it is also the simplest with clear and absolute caps.
4. Allow for job portability, without losing the worker's place in the green card line, on the filing of an application for labor certification—this issue is also touched upon above. Highly skilled immigrants waiting for green cards are trapped on temporary visas. Even though the law allows for certain temporary visa holders, such as H-1bs, to change jobs, many immigrants opt not to do so for a simple reason: changing employers under the current system means starting over in the green card line. For highly skilled immigrants deeply impacted by per country limits, the incentives to remain with their current employer at any cost are high. Allowing highly skilled immigrants to change jobs once they have filed for green cards without losing their place in line will empower these workers to pursue their maximum employment potential, adding greatly to morale and further protecting these immigrants from potential abuses. Allowing opportunities to compete for market based wages and career advancement opportunities ensures a robust labor market that benefits native and foreign born workers alike.
5. Exempt certain categories from the employment-based caps—as noted in my testimony already, family members use up a significant portion of employment-based green cards. Other categories of highly skilled immigrants may also deserve special consideration when applying for employment-based green cards. To this end, I recommend exempting from the employment-based caps individuals who meet the following criteria:
 - STEM degree holders with an advanced degree from a U.S. university
 - Spouses and children of employment-based immigrant visa recipients
 - National Interest Waiver recipients designated to have exceptional ability
 - Physicians that provide designated services in medically underserved areas

These are but a few examples of the creative ways in which our green card system can provide additional numbers by incentivizing positive behaviors that benefit the country and/or address the intended spirit of the law.

6. Provide for the roll-over of unused immigrant visa numbers to the following fiscal year—given the loss of visas due to bureaucratic inefficiencies on an annual basis, rolling visas forward is the best way to ensure that recapture is an embedded principle of the employment-based system.

On the question of enforcement, I want to clarify our position. Some argue that the employment-based immigration system should “rollout the red carpet” for every well-educated foreign professional willing to live and work in America. My fellow highly skilled immigrants and I appreciate the sentiment, but we do not expect celebrity treatment. We know there must be reasonable restrictions on the flow of immigrants to America. We know that reasonable protections must be in place to make sure that U.S. workers are not displaced unknowingly by those seeking permanent residency in the United States. Any appearance of fraud in the system hurts us as much as anyone else. We know these restrictions and protections add time to our wait for green cards, and we accept this process as the price for entry on a permanent basis to the U.S. We are future Americans, and we share an interest in making sure that foreign workers coming to the U.S. are truly needed.

The backlog begins once these reasonable processes have concluded. That is what my fellow immigrants find so deeply frustrating about the wait for green cards. We are not held in limbo for years to ensure that jobs that should go to Americans are protected. On the contrary, for countries impacted by per country limits, most of the highly skilled immigrants waiting for green cards have long since been deemed additive to the U.S. economy through a rigorous market test known as “labor certification”. Inadequate numbers are the primary delay in the system, and because highly skilled immigrants are forced to wait on temporary visas, many of the negative externalities raised by critics, such as incentives to pay low wages and fear of leaving abusive employers lest you be removed from the country, are amplified by the backlog itself. Abuse is a rare exception, but for those concerned about it, fighting the expansion of employment-based green cards is fully counterproductive to their goals.

A Closing Thought on Temporary Visas

People must trust a system to believe in it. The actions of a few bad actors have not only eroded the reputation of the H-1b visa program, their actions have undermined trust in highly skilled immigrants themselves. To rebuild this trust, we must eliminate the bad actors. The law provides for ample enforcement in nonimmigrant programs—I urge you to use that power to restore faith in a highly skilled immigration system that can and will continue to benefit the U.S. economy and the American workforce. Our excessive reliance on temporary visas from a lack of green cards is of course largely to blame for the enforcement issues within the programs. Adopting the employment-based green card reforms I have outlined above is the surest way to refocus the attention of immigration officials on the relatively small but very damaging problem of temporary visa fraud.

People are not perfectly substitutable, and empirical studies will never explain fully what qualifies one worker over another. What we do know is that there is no prize for second place in the global economy, and there is no place for good enough in cutting edge technology. When a company determines it wants the best person for a job regardless of where they are from, that company in many cases is doing so as an alternative to moving jobs overseas. As we are future Americans, we are tied to the success of the US economy and the jobs that are created here. America’s continued prosperity and the availability of jobs in the future, especially for our children, are of enormous importance to us. We know the vast majority of highly skilled foreign professionals add far more value than they take from our economy. All

we ask for in return is the opportunity to make permanent our place in the country where we work, raise our children, and call our home.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the privilege of testifying before you today. I am truly honored to have this opportunity to share my story and my views as a newly minted green card holder. I am also honored to testify on behalf of my fellow Immigration Voice friends and colleagues, all of whom are future Americans if they aren't already. Everyone could tell a different story of how they got here, but our coalition comes together because we share a deep desire to make America our permanent home. I believe America is the greatest country on earth. We have freedom. We have opportunity, and today we have the advantage in emerging industries. With a serious commitment to reforming our employment-based green card system, I believe highly skilled immigrants can help America return to prosperity, creating jobs and growing our economy through innovation. I hope you will consider the recommendations I have made today, and I'll look forward to our continued work together.