

Dear Senators:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to share with you our support of the Dodd amendment to the proposed immigration bill. Under current law, parents of U.S. citizens are defined as immediate relatives, along with spouses and minor children, and are exempt from visa limitations.

The proposed legislation removes them from this category, subjects them to an annual cap of 40,000 green cards, and creates a new parent visitor visa category that would allow them to stay in the United States for only 30 days. Typically, 90,000 visas are issued each year to parents – the proposal reduces the number of visas available by more than half. The agreement also penalizes all parents from a particular country by barring them from entering into the United States should the rate of overstay of parents from that country be above 7 percent in two consecutive years.

The debate around this provision goes to the heart of the value we place on family. Parents are not distant relatives but absolutely vital members to most families. Often, parents enable their adult children to work by providing free and trusted care for their grandchildren. Immigrant parents also contribute their labor and talents to small, family owned businesses. The American economy also benefits from having dollars earned here, be spent here instead of having to be sent overseas to family members left behind.

Contrary to some arguments, immigrant parents coming through the family system will not burden taxpayers or the economy. In fact, as non-citizens, they are generally ineligible for a majority of federal public benefits unless they earn them through sufficient work. Moreover, their adult children must sign affidavits of support and prove that they have sufficient resources to support their parents.

The Dodd amendment recognizes these close family ties and the economic and societal benefits that accrue when they are honored by:

- **Increasing the green card cap to 90,000.** The number 90,000 represents the average annual number of green cards issued to parents. The proposed bill slashes this number by more than half to 40,000. This amendment would ensure that sufficient numbers of green cards are available for parents to come to the United States.
- **Extending the parent visa to 180 days, and making it renewable and valid for three years.** These are already accepted timeframes for other temporary visas. 180 days is the length of a tourist visa; H-1Bs are valid for three years. The proposed bill, however, limits parents to an annual stay of 30 days, and does not specify long-term validity. This is too short an allotment – particularly for parents who come to help their children.
- **Making penalties for parent visa overstays applicable only to guilty parties.** The proposed bill states that if the overstay rate among visa holders exceeds 7 percent for two years, all nationals of countries with high overstay rates can be barred from this visa program or the program can be terminated. Sponsors of overstays are also barred from sponsoring other aliens on this visa. This amendment strikes language that unfairly collectively punishes those who have not violated the law, allowing law-abiding parents to continue to unite with their children.

The Dodd amendment unites parents with their families in the U.S. by increasing the annual cap on green cards for parents; extending the duration of the parent visa; and ensuring that penalties

imposed on overstays are not unfairly applied to others. We are asking that you vote for this amendment.

Respectfully,

National

American Friends Service Committee
American Immigration Lawyers Association
American Jewish Committee
Asian American Justice Center
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now
Dominican American National Roundtable
Hmong National Development
League of United Latin American Citizens
Legal Momentum
Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Council of La Raza
National Federation of Filipino American Associations
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Organization for Justice & Equality
Service Employees International Union
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
The Episcopal Church
The Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
US Citizens for United Families
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
World Relief

Local

Asian Law Caucus, San Francisco, CA
CAUSA, Oregon
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, Portland, ME