

July 24, 2014

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Dear Secretary Johnson:

We welcome President Obama's announcement that he will be drawing on your recommendations for executive action to begin to fix the broken immigration system. As organizations with significant experience and commitment to civil and labor rights, we urge you to include, as part of broad relief efforts, measures to ensure that workplace retaliation and the enforcement of immigration law do not continue to interfere with workers' ability to assert their rights on the job.

Across the country each day, we work to protect workers' minimum wages, ensure healthy and safe workplaces, eliminate discrimination on the job, protect whistleblowers, and respond to retaliation. Our experience shows us that it is far too easy for bad employers to misuse our immigration system and that the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) workplace enforcement policies frustrate efforts to win improvements. A policy change is urgently needed.

Workers who refuse to work in illegal or substandard conditions, or who speak up to improve those conditions, routinely face job loss and other tactics intended to defeat their organizing campaigns. Employers frequently threaten immigration retaliation when workers seek to better their conditions. Too often speaking out or engaging in concerted activity results in the workers being placed in immigration detention and deportation. Fewer immigrant workers act to protect and enforce their rights because of the clear link between asserting their rights and facing immigration enforcement. Workers legitimately fear that they or their co-workers will face immigration consequences if they stand up against low pay or labor or civil rights violations.

This system hurts not only workers, but good employers too. Exploitative employers use the current DHS enforcement regime to maintain below-market or illegally low pay and workplace standards. This gives them a competitive advantage over good employers who follow the law. Good employers are also disadvantaged – and wages and working conditions are depressed – when they are targeted for immigration enforcement over their competitors.

DHS must ensure that its actions do not discourage workers from taking action to protect and enforce their own rights and the rights of their co-workers and that immigration enforcement actions don't otherwise undermine wages and working conditions.

We urge you to enact broad relief along with enforcement reforms to guarantee that DHS policies do not interfere with workers' rights and that immigration enforcement and retaliation are not used by abusive employers. By acting and improving protections for workers who expose illegal workplace conditions, you will raise the standards of all this nation's workplaces.

Sincerely,

9to5

9to5 Atlanta

9to5 California

9to5 Colorado

9to5 Wisconsin

ActivateTheVote

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), Local 12

Alianza de Lideres Mexico-Americanos de CT

Alianza Indigena Sin Fronteras

Alianza para el futuro

American Civil Liberties Union

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Federation of Teachers

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

Arise Chicago

Arise for Social Justice

Arkansas Interfaith Alliance

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles

Asian Americans Advancing Justice-AAJC

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance(APALA), AFL-CIO

Assisting Latinos

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)

Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs

Atlanta Jobs with Justice

Blue Water Safe Horizons

Brazilian Immigrant Center Inc.

Brazilian Women's Group

Break the Chain Campaign, Institute for Policy Studies (IPS)

Casa Latina

Casa Latina

Catholic Charities of West TN

Center for Community Change

Central Florida Jobs with Justice

Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc. (CDM)

Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha (CETUL)

Chelsea Collaborative

Chelsea Collaborative
Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center
Civil Rights For Immigrants Action of Greater Lansing
Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, Los Angeles (CLUE-LA)
Cleveland Jobs with Justice
Cleveland Jobs with Justice
Coalition for Economic Justice
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
Comité de Justicia Laboral
Community Hub for Opportunities in Construction Employment (C.H.O.I.C.E.)
Day Labor Program and Women's Collective
DC Jobs with Justice
Detention Watch Network
Don Bosco Workers, Inc.
Employment Justice Center
END
Farmworker Association of Florida
First Unitarian Church of LA
Florida Center for Fiscal and Economic policy
Florida Center for Fiscal and Economic Policy
Florida legal Services, Inc.
Freedom Network USA
Friends of Miami Dade Detainees
Fuerza del Valle Workers' Center
Gamaliel
Garment Worker Center
Georgetown Hoyas for Immigrant Rights
Georgetown Solidarity Committee
Global Workers Justice Alliance
Guatemalan Committee Ixim Ulew
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Institute of the Black World 21st Century
ISAAC Immigrant Support And Assistance Center
Jesuit Social Research Institute/Loyola University New Orleans
Jewish Labor Committee
Jobs With Justice

La Raza Centro Legal
La Union del Pueblo Entero
Labor & Employment Committee of the National Lawyers Guild
Labor/Community Strategy Center
Latino Advocacy Foundation of Fairfield County
Latino Union de Chicago
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Legal Aid Justice Center -- Immigrant Advocacy Program
Legal Aid Society - Employment Law Center
Long Island Jobs with Justice
Long Island Teachers for Human Rights
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Massachusetts Jobs With Justice
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Metrowest Worker Center
Monument Impact
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Employment Law Project
National Guestworker Alliance (NGA)
National Minority AIDS Council
New Immigrant Community Empowerment
New Immigrant Community Empowerment
New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice (NOWCRJ)
NJ Communities United
New Jersey DREAM Act Coalition (NJDAC)
North Carolina Justice Center
Obreros Unidos de Yonkers
OneAmerica
Paso del Norte Civil Rights Project
Peace Action
Pilipino Workers Center of Southern California
Pittsburgh LCLAA
Portland Jobs with Justice
Public Justice Center
Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) - DC

Rhode Island Jobs With Justice
RIESA, Local 401, SEIU
Roofers & Waterproofers Local 36
SEIU 32BJ
SEIU United Service Workers West
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian Network
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southeast Immigrant Rights Network
Southern Poverty Law Center
St. Joseph Valley Project Jobs with Justice
Stop the Checkpoints
Student Labor Action Project
Student Labor Action Project
Thai Community Development Center
The Advocates for Human Rights
The Cross Border Network
The International Institute of Connecticut, Inc.
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Legal Aid Society
Trabajadores Unidos de Washington, D.C.
Traprock Center for Peace and Justice
UCLA Labor Center
UFCW International Union
UNITE HERE International Union
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
United Community Center of Westchester Inc.
United Domestic Workers Of America
United Farm Workers
United Workers Congress
V.O.T.E.
Washington Peace Center
WeCount!
Western Mass. Jobs with Justice
Worker Justice Center of New York
Workers Justice Project
Workplace Justice Initiative

Workplace Justice Initiative

Workplace Project

Youth and Young Adult Network of the National Farm Worker Ministry (YAYA-NFWM)

cc:

Cecilia Munoz, Assistant to the President and Director, Domestic Policy Council

Alejandro Mayorkas, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Thomas Perez, Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor

Jacqueline Berrian, Chair, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Richard Griffin, General Counsel, National Labor Relations Board