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PRESS RELEASE
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A Nation of Broken Immigration Laws

The United States currently is faced with an unprecedented immigration crisis, as tens of thousands of often-unaccompanied children, many under age 12, continue to cross the nation's southwestern border.

Because Congress didn't enact a comprehensive immigration reform –in fact, there has been no major immigration reform for more than a decade– there is no adequate policy or process in place to direct immigration officials on how to handle the more than 50,000 unaccompanied immigrant children who have entered the United States illegally since late last year.

This is a humanitarian and human rights crisis of major proportions, which calls for the United States to act quickly, humanely and provide the immigrant children with due process under the law as required and recommended under the nation's 2008 law against human trafficking. Make no mistake, this crisis has refocused, once again, our attention on our nation's badly broken immigration system.

We the **Florida Democratic Hispanic Caucus** encourage President Barack Obama to use the Executive power of the Presidency to address immigration reform, until such time as Congress takes serious steps toward a comprehensive overhaul of immigration policy.

A proper immigration reform can help propel our economy by unleashing the academic, entrepreneurial and labor potential of immigrant workers.

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Comprehensive immigration reform should aim to *reverse* the punitive enforcement and removal measures Congress set in place in 1996, which has helped create the crisis that now exists. Proper immigration reform would propel our economy by focusing on the academic, entrepreneurial, and labor potential of immigrant workers.

Other reform measures should include, but not be limited to, fixing the following immigration flaws:

- Provide legal counsel and a hearing for all immigrant children who have crossed the border, not rapid deportation.
- Reduce the backlog of the immigration courts by investing in necessary technology and hiring more judges, counsel and other personnel.
- Cease breaking up families, which is hurting our communities and businesses. Nearly 2 million people –fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and hard workers– have already been deported in the last six years. (This recommendation does *not* apply to immigrants with criminal backgrounds.)
- Grant permanent resident status to DACA recipients or Dreamers, who arrived in the country illegally as children. The United States is the only country they know and claim as their own.
- Reform the Customs and Border Patrol to allow for more transparent policies, more humane treatment of undocumented immigrants and no immigrant removal without due process.
- End Secure Communities, the federal policy that uses local police to enforce immigration laws. Immigration is a federal responsibility; local police are best left to fight and prevent local crime.
- Provide a pathway to citizenship for the more than 11 million undocumented immigrants already living in the shadows of the United States.
- Adjust the annual immigration quotas imposed by Congress, which determine who may come here. These quotas haven't changed since 1990.
- Approve, or reject, all H1B visas for highly skilled and educated workers on their merits. This program currently has an unreasonably low annual cap of 85,000.

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- Enact an immigration reform that doesn't encourage more waves of undocumented immigrants.
- Provide more assistance to Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, which are grappling with youth gang violence, a major cause of the exodus of minors to the United States.
- Extend Temporary Protective Status (TPS) enjoyed by other Central American immigrants in the U.S. to Guatemalan immigrants. In addition, extend the TPS deadlines for Hondurans past its January 2015 expiration date and for Salvadorans past its March 2015 date.
- Revise policies to allow immigrants protected by TPS to bring their children to the U.S. This is an important factor contributing to the current crisis of unaccompanied immigrant minors.
- Commit to updating immigration laws on a regular and consistent basis, thereby pre-empting crises such as the one the nation is now facing.

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