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NELP Commends Obama Administration for Providing Immigration Relief to Young “Dreamers”

Washington, DC—Today, the Obama administration unveiled a major and important initiative in its immigration policy, announcing that it will provide temporary relief from deportation to young undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children. The relief, known as deferred action, will also make work permits available to these young people, who are commonly known as “Dreamers” in reference to the Dream Act federal reform legislation they have sought to pass for over a decade.

“The Obama administration has taken a sound, courageous, and compassionate step towards affording immigrant youth the opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute fully to society,” said **Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project**. “In the wake of Congress’s failure to pass the Dream Act, this measure will allow an estimated 800,000 undocumented young individuals to overcome one of the greatest barriers to economic opportunity in our society. We congratulate the Dreamers for their tireless efforts at organizing and mobilizing support for their just cause. These vibrant young people have grown up here and think of themselves first and foremost as Americans. It is past time they should be able to freely and openly assume their rightful place as American workers, give back to the country they believe has given richly to them, and contribute to our economic recovery and success as a nation built on the promise of opportunity for all,” said Owens.

Deferred action status will allow these young individuals to pursue their education and work legally without fear of deportation. The status will be renewable every two years but does not lead to permanent residence or citizenship.

To be eligible, individuals must have arrived in the United States before the age of 16 and have lived here for at least five years; be in school, have completed high school or a GED, or served honorably in the military; have no significant criminal convictions; and not be older than age 30.

“We applaud the administration for its wise use of prosecutorial discretion to afford relief to these deserving young people,” said Owens. “Until Congress achieves a meaningful solution to our broken immigration system, we urge the administration to continue to exercise its discretion and grant deferred action in appropriate cases, particularly where immigrant workers are trying to blow the whistle on abuse and protect their rights on the job.”

The National Employment Law Project is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts research, education, and advocacy on issues affecting low-wage and unemployed workers. For more about NELP, visit www.nelp.org.

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