

Testimony for the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security entitled “Addressing the Immigration Status of Illegal Immigrants Brought to the United States as Children”

Tuesday July, 23rd 2013

Thank you Chairman Gowdy and the Immigration Subcommittee Members for the opportunity speak today on this panel on the legalization of the young undocumented population present in the United States.

Historically, there is no question that immigrants have contributed greatly to the strength, prosperity, and vitality of our nation.

Americans understand that people are an asset to be valued because we are a nation of, by and for the People -- without which our American experiment would cease to function.

Unfortunately, our current system is broken and has become overly burdensome for individuals and their families, who want to come to the U.S. in search of a better life.

The legal immigration process is so difficult that it encourages breaking the law rather than wading through a complicated bureaucratic visa system.

For these reasons, I support conservative immigration reform because our current system simply does not work for the individuals who share our beliefs and deeply desire to be here.

Although I understand the issue of immigration reform has become divisive, I do believe we can come together on at least one single issue.

We can and should provide a path to citizenship for the young undocumented individuals who were brought here by their parents.

These young people have grown up here, attended school here, and know of no other country besides the United States.

It should be easy for us to formally accept them into society as long as they have stayed out of trouble and are independent, productive residents.

Also, many of these young people wish to serve this country in uniform.

My late father, a retired Army master sergeant, taught me that there is no higher demonstration of American citizenship than serving in the military.

As a Marine Corps combat veteran myself, I could not agree more and I strongly urge that these individuals have the opportunity to enlist and serve if they qualify.

Early this year, I introduced H.R. 435, the Military Enlistment Opportunity Act, which would allow qualified Deferred Action Childhood Arrivals to enlist in the military.

Most importantly, H.R. 435 provides a path to citizenship through military service, giving recruits access to all areas of military service including Officer Candidate School, Special Forces, military police, and cyber security.

Citizenship is a prerequisite for a security clearance -- without which -- these career fields are foreclosed.

This access to additional talent is also highly beneficial to our armed services because creating a greater pool of recruits is crucial for the military to confront an impending recruitment problem.

Recently, a study completed by Mission Readiness, titled "Ready, Willing and Unable to Serve," concluded that 75 percent of young adults ages 17 to 24 are not fit for military service.

The vast majority of applicants are turned away because they don't have a high school diploma, are overweight, have a criminal record or a history of substance abuse.

My bill would allow the military to continue to choose from the best by expanding their recruiting base. This is essential for our national security.

Finally, unlike other proposals like the Senate bill, HR 435 is in line with how the military enlistment process functions.

By certifying the individual before they attempt to enlist, we relieve the military of performing the central functions of the Department of Homeland Security.

Although the military does perform background checks and confirm documents, their central function is to ensure the best and brightest are joining their ranks rather than authenticating individual documents.

HR 435 is a commonsense bill that helps young undocumented individuals as well as the military.

I hope that this Committee and the House as a whole understand how important immigration reform can be for our military and national security, and

I look forward to working together on legislation that not only helps the young people gain legalization but also aids the armed services maintain their elite and unparalleled level of service to this nation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I yield back.