

Asian American & Pacific Islander Families Platform

Keep families together through humane immigration policies

We believe our immigration system must keep families together.

Under our current broken immigration system, approximately 1 out of 10 Asian Americans and 1 out of 7 Korean Americans are undocumented, many of whom are young people. These individuals have worked hard to boost the nation's economy and serve as leaders in their communities, but they have no way of becoming citizens and fully integrated into the United States. Their contributions go unnoticed and they live under the threat of being torn apart from their families and communities through deportation.

Families are also kept apart by an immigration system that forces individuals to wait up to 23 years to be reunited with their loved ones. Asian Americans are more likely to join their families in the US through the family-based immigration system. Over 77,000 Korean Americans are caught in the immigration backlogs.

- *Implementation of Deferred Action for Undocumented Young People.* The recent announcement by the Department of Homeland Security on June 15 to protect eligible undocumented young people from deportation and provide work authorization is a tremendous first step to ensuring that they can continue to study and find a job without fearing separation from their families. We must ensure that this new policy change is implemented well so that the most number of young people can benefit from it. We must protect it from any attempts to dismantle the program.
- *Pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform for Young People and their Parents.* Recently the Supreme Court affirmed, in a 5-3 decision, that immigration is a matter of federal government and Arizona's ill-conceived state law SB1070 is unconstitutional. Similarly, laws like in Alabama and Georgia similarly have no place in this country and are counter to the nation's best interests. Congress must take action to have a reasonable conversation on how to achieve federal comprehensive immigration that provides a path to legalization, reduces the immigration wait times, and that the basic rights of all people are protected.

Ensure that all young people have access to an affordable education and a future, including a pathway to legalization & in-state tuition options

We believe that our future depends on every young person having the right to access higher education.

Parents and their children are worried about their education and a future. With the rising cost of tuition and often limited access to financial assistance, their dreams of graduating college and getting a good job are getting more difficult to attain.

In particular, undocumented immigrant youth, 1 in 10 of whom are AAPI, face many barriers to good quality education. Many undocumented youth entered the U.S. at a young age, attended K-12 here but do not realize that they are undocumented until they start filling out admission forms or applying to jobs. Their

immigration status often prevent them from qualifying for financial assistance or obtaining a job of their choice and they too constantly live under the fear of deportation.

- *Keep college affordable.* Over the last several years, the cost of college has steadily increased. On average, for a 4-year college, tuition grew by 28% over 5 years. These costs do not even cover room, board and books. For students who are eligible for loans, rising tuition costs has also meant an increase in the amount of debt they take on which can impact students and their families for a lifetime.
- *Protect and Promote in-state tuition options for undocumented youth.* Many undocumented students pay out of state tuition rates even if they have resided, gone to school and paid taxes in their state for many years. The difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition could be several thousand dollars a year. Last year, Maryland passed a similar law to ones in California and Illinois, called the Maryland Dream Act which allows eligible undocumented students in-state tuition. It is currently at risk of being struck down by a referendum during the November election. We must work to protect this option so that all young people have a fair chance at affording college.
- *Pass the DREAM Act.* While the DHS announcement was a welcome step to protect young people from deportation, we need a more permanent solution by providing young people with a path to legalization. Passing legislation like the DREAM Act could go a long way in making sure that 65,000 undocumented young people who graduate every year will be fully recognized for the potential that they bring to this country. Congress must act to pass legislation like the DREAM Act which provides a path to legalization for young people.

Build strong neighborhoods by protecting affordable housing and stopping unnecessary foreclosures

We believe that at the heart of all families is a good home.

In the midst of the financial collapse and housing crisis, over 1.2 million homes were lost. AAPI families were hit particularly hard and continue to be on the brink of foreclosure. Between 2005 and 2007 the modest progress that Asian Americans made in closing the home ownership gap was wiped out by the foreclosure crises. Korean Americans home ownership rates are one of the lowest among AAPI's at about 49%.

Families undergoing foreclosure need housing counseling assistance programs which have proven to help people hold on to their homes. The process of saving a home is complicated and often in-language assistance and cultural competency is necessary to ensure that AAPI homeowners have the best shot possible. Unfortunately this important program has been gutted through budget cuts. We need to restore these programs, expand its availability, and continue to seek policy changes such as principle reduction to help struggling homeowners stay in their homes.

At the same time, the most vulnerable in our community, in particular, seniors and those who are low-income need access to affordable housing. For example Korean American seniors in Southern California, who live at twice the rate of poverty than Whites seniors, can wait up to 10 years for affordable senior housing to become

available. We need programs that increase the supply of affordable housing and provide opportunities for families to find quality homes.

Restore the American dream by demanding the wealthiest pay their fair share and invest in the public good.

We believe that all Americans should pay their fair share.

Over the last decade the tax system has rewarded the wealthiest top percent through tax loopholes and capital gains tax. Meanwhile, low-income families are suffering more and more from budget cuts to many critical programs and services. Programs like Social Security and Medicare are critical safety nets for seniors and education is key to the futures of our children. To protect these programs, the wealthiest must pay their fair share and contribute to these programs that benefit us all.