



July 22, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

The International Labor Recruitment Working Group (ILRWG) is the first coordinated effort to strategically address abuses in international labor recruitment. The ILRWG has worked on human trafficking prevention measures since its formation in 2011.

The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 recognized for the first time trafficking in persons as a specific offense. Subsequent renewals of the TVPA have enjoyed wide bipartisan support. Congress unanimously passed the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2008. The 2008 TVPRA includes important provisions to ensure that vulnerable migrants are not returned to traffickers or other dangerous and potentially life-threatening situations. The TVPRA has served as an important tool to combat human trafficking, specifically the trafficking of children.

However, in recent days, proposals have been made that would dilute protections in the TVPRA. The proposed changes are a knee-jerk reaction to a humanitarian situation and have been hastily made without consideration of the long-term consequences. The ILRWG opposes any attempt to amend or eliminate section 235 of the 2008 TVPRA. Section 235 provides important due process protections for children to determine if they are eligible for immigration relief as victims of trafficking or persecution. The proposed changes to section 235 would eliminate or alter appropriate screening for trafficking and persecution, and the opportunity for children to have their legal claims heard before an immigration judge. If the changes became law, removals would follow basic screenings that have inadequately identified genuine refugee and trafficking claims in the past.

The TVPRA is not the cause of the current humanitarian situation. Both Canada and Mexico have also seen an increase in refugee children from Central America. Additionally, the number of refugee children remained relatively stable from 2009-2011, immediately following the passage of the TVPRA.

The ILRWG urges the Administration and Congress to ensure that the U.S. complies with its obligations under U.S. and international law. In this dire humanitarian situation, we call upon the Administration and Congress not to change section 235 of the TVPRA, or make any other changes to the TVPRA that would reduce access to justice or eliminate other critically important protections against human trafficking.

Sincerely,

International Labor Recruitment Working Group

AFL-CIO

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

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

Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST)

Department for Professional Employees (DPE)

Economic Policy Institute (EPI)

Farmworker Justice

Global Workers Justice Alliance

National Domestic Workers Alliance

National Guestworker Alliance (NGA)

Polaris

Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

Solidarity Center

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)

UNITE HERE International Union

Verité

Arturo Carrillo, Director

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George Washington University Law School

Patricia Pittman, Professor of Health Policy, George Washington University

We Belong Together: Women for Commonsense Immigration Reform