

MONTEREY COUNTY



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February 23, 2021

The Honorable Jimmy Panetta
406 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: H.R. 1177, U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 - Support

Dear Congressman Panetta:

I write today on behalf of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors to express our support for the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 (H.R. 1177). This comprehensive immigration reform legislation addresses many of the County's immigration policy priorities, such as promoting family unity, worker protections, and economic growth.

For many years, the Board has ensured that immigration policy is a prominent component of the Monterey County Legislative Program given its importance to the social and economic fabric of our community. As you know, the County has a long history of supporting comprehensive immigration reform and opposing policies intended to punish noncitizens. In 2013, the Board adopted a resolution in support of the bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform legislation that passed the Senate by a vote of 68-32. More recently, the Board has taken action in support of Dreamers, TPS beneficiaries, and agricultural workers, while opposing Trump administration policies on family separation, travel bans, public charge, and a citizenship question on the 2020 Census.

The U.S. Citizenship Act embodies the legislative proposals that President Biden sent to Congress on the first day of his administration. The bill would modernize our nation's immigration policies by creating a pathway to legal status for most of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States, reforming the immigration court system, overhauling management of U.S. borders, and addressing the root causes of undocumented migration to the United States. It would also streamline and improve the functioning of the family-based and employment-based immigration policies.

We are especially pleased to see that the bill includes elements of the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, which the County supported in the 116th Congress. This provision would afford temporary status to certain noncitizen agricultural workers along with an expedited process toward citizenship if they pass a background check, establish that they have paid all outstanding taxes, and demonstrate a knowledge of English and U.S. civics. As you know, agriculture is the cornerstone of prosperity in Monterey County, contributing a total of \$8.1 billion and 76,000 jobs to the local economy. Current immigration policies make it increasingly difficult to meet the workforce needs of an industry that is highly dependent on an adequate supply of immigrant labor. The agricultural labor provisions of the U.S. Citizenship Act will greatly improve the economic vitality of our region.

Monterey County greatly appreciates your leadership role on immigration issues in Congress, and we thank you for cosponsoring the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021.

Sincerely,

DRAFT

Wendy Root Askew
Chair, Board of Supervisors

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Cc: U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator Alex Padilla