

Anti-Poverty Advocates Condemn the RAISE Act as an Affront to Working Families

[WASHINGTON, D.C. – August 4, 2017] —Yesterday, Senators David Perdue (R-GA) and Tom Cotton (R-AR) released the Reforming American Immigration for Strong Economy Act (RAISE Act), which would drastically reduce legal immigration to the United States.

Backed by the Trump Administration, the proposal would cap refugee admissions, cut total immigration in half by eliminating diversity visas and cutting family-based visas, and create a new visa system that awards points to potential immigrants based on characteristics such as speaking English and having higher education levels. The bill also includes troubling provisions that would threaten the health and wellbeing of hard-working immigrants and their families by barring them from basic health care and nutrition assistance and creating barriers to naturalization simply for needing this help.

In response, **more than 160 organizations** from the anti-poverty, health, civil rights, anti-hunger, disability, faith-based and children's advocacy communities released this statement condemning the proposal:

“The RAISE Act is yet another attack on low-income communities of color, in this case immigrants and their families. The proposal would keep families apart and close the doors of opportunity to people who come to the United States to work their way up and provide a better future for their families. It ignores the contributions of hard-working immigrants, who represent a range of skills and income levels, and threatens the health and wellbeing of entire families.

“The bill seeks to punish all members of a household—including U.S. citizen children—by denying them access to health care and nutrition assistance for up to five years simply because one family member entered on a points-based visa. This proposal is unconstitutional because it discriminates against citizens based on their family status and presents an egregious and unprecedented assault on the rights and wellbeing of U.S. citizens, many of whom are children whose healthy development is critical to our nation’s future prosperity. Moreover, it would create additional barriers to immigrants seeking to naturalize, preventing some who have used health care or other help with basic needs from becoming citizens and penalizing their sponsors, creating a chilling effect that could make more immigrants and their families reluctant to access critical supports. By demonizing families for simply needing health care and other supports, the proposal directly contradicts what we have learned from the past months of the Congressional debate: that Americans believe that our nation benefits when everyone can get the health care they need.

“This bill would do nothing to help working Americans. Rather, it will only weaken our economy and our communities. Furthermore, this attempt to restrict the rich diversity that immigration brings to our country—and to devalue immigrants who work hard in a range of critical jobs—pulls the veil off the harsh nativist agenda that has already been shown in the cruel and arbitrary surge in enforcement activities targeting our immigrant neighbors.

“We urge Members of Congress and our allies to reject this harmful proposal. Instead, we must work together to push for immigration reform that upholds our American values of inclusivity and respect for people from all economic backgrounds.”

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