



October 13, 2021

Vice President Kamala Harris  
The White House  
Office of the Vice President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20050

Dear Vice President Harris,

RE: The Role of the Vice President in the Reconciliation Process to Deliver Green Cards for Immigrant Communities

We, the undersigned organizations representing Communities United for Status and Protection (CUSP), write to urge you to use the full extent of your existing authority to ensure a pathway to citizenship is included in the *Build Back Better* budget reconciliation package. The Congressional Budget Act makes explicit that you, Vice President Harris, as Presiding Officer of the Senate, have independent authority to rule on points of order including Byrd Rule questions, regardless of the Parliamentarian's advisory opinion.<sup>1</sup> While we defer to you and Senate Majority Leader Schumer on the rules of the Senate and how they are implemented, we also are arming ourselves with the research and the most brilliant minds to ensure we are using all tools at our disposal - our communication is reflective of this urgency.

As you are aware, millions of undocumented immigrants living in the United States are counting on the Biden-Harris Administration to keep its promise of a pathway to citizenship this year. These undocumented immigrants are essential workers who have kept the country afloat and safe as the pandemic has raged on for nearly two years. These undocumented immigrants are long-term residents of the U.S., holding on to temporary statuses like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, Deferred Enforced Departure, and Temporary Protected Status. They are members of our Black, Brown, Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities. These undocumented immigrants are the people for whom we have the privilege of advocating for as CUSP.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 U.S. Code § 644 - Extraneous matter in reconciliation legislation. Available at: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/2/644>.

Two weeks ago, the entire world watched in horror as Border Patrol officers brutalized primarily Haitian immigrants seeking safety on our shores. CUSP member organizations: Haitian Bridge Alliance, UndocuBlack Network, and African Communities Together have been at the forefront of Black-led efforts to respond to these violations of basic rights. These devastating developments highlight the urgent need for stability, safety, and permanent protection for undocumented people in the U.S. -- but especially for immigrants of color who face disproportionate harms and discrimination for their intersecting identities.

The immigrant communities impacted by the *Build Back Better* proposal are disproportionately women of color, many of whom hail from the communities we represent, including Black, Brown, Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities that have long supported the Biden-Harris agenda. These women -- and what they contribute to society -- are not temporary, and their protections should be permanent.

You are the first person in national office to represent so many of us. We look to you, Vice President Harris, as the first woman, the first Black woman, the first Asian woman, the first Caribbean woman, and the first child of immigrants to rise to the high office of Vice President to now stand tall for our undocumented immigrant communities. You have the authority and the mandate from the most diverse coalition of voters ever assembled to fight to fulfill the Biden-Harris campaign promise, and that includes a pathway to citizenship for immigrant communities. We urge you to take bold action to secure a pathway to citizenship provisions -- provisions with a budgetary impact that will be felt for decades to come -- in the reconciliation process.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to share what citizenship means for our communities and the work we are doing to secure full support in Congress for permanent residency in the reconciliation package. Additionally, we would appreciate being able to hear from you about the commitments you can make to pass such a provision into law. We thank you in advance for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Pabitra Benjamin  
Executive Director  
Adhikaar

Amaha Kassa  
Executive Director  
African Communities Together

Guerline Jozef  
Executive Director  
Haitian Bridge Alliance

Rima Meroueh  
Executive Director  
NNAAC

Patrice Lawrence  
Executive Director  
UndocuBlack Network

CC: Majority Leader Chuck Schumer  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Communities United for Status and Protection (CUSP)** is a collaborative of grassroots immigrant community organizations working together to win permanent status for our members and communities, and build a more inclusive immigrant rights movement that centers the needs and experiences of African, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinx, Arab/Middle Eastern, and API immigrants.

**The UndocuBlack Network (UBN)**, founded in 2016, is a multigenerational network of currently and formerly undocumented Black people that fosters community, facilitates access to resources and contributes to transforming the realities of our people so we are thriving and living our fullest lives. UBN has chapters in New York City, the DC/MD/VA area, and Los Angeles, CA.

**Adhikaar** (Nepali: rights) is a New York-based non-profit, organizing the Nepali-speaking community to promote human rights and social justice for all. We are a women-led workers' center and community center focused on workers' rights, immigration rights, access to affordable healthcare and language justice. We organize the Nepali-speaking community to create broader social change; build coalitions on advocacy campaigns that address our community's needs; center women and the most impacted communities in our leadership; engage members in participatory action research; and implement community education, workplace development training, and support services.

**African Communities Together (ACT)** is an organization of African immigrants fighting for civil rights, opportunity, and a better life for our families here in the U.S. and worldwide. ACT empowers African immigrants to integrate socially, get ahead economically, and engage civically. We connect African immigrants to critical services, help Africans develop as leaders, and organize our communities on the issues that matter.

**Haitian Bridge Alliance (HBA)** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community organization that advocates for fair and humane immigration policies and provides bond support and humanitarian, legal, and other social services, with a particular focus on Black immigrants, the Haitian community, women, LGBTQAI+ individuals and survivors of torture and other human rights abuses. Since 2015, HBA has provided services to asylum seekers and other migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, in U.S. detention, and during U.S. immigration proceedings.

**National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)** is a national consortium of independent Arab American community-based organizations. The Network's primary mission is to build the capacity of Arab American non-profit organizations that focus on the needs and issues impacting their local community while collectively addressing those issues nationally