



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1416-2020, **Version:** A

Res. No. 1416-A

Resolution calling on the United States Department of Homeland Security to halt all deportation proceedings for the length of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a means of restricting the global spread of this disease.

By Council Members Eugene, Kallos, Rosenthal, Ayala and Louis

Whereas, SARS-CoV-2 is the virus responsible for causing the new infectious disease known as COVID-19; and

Whereas, The first cases of humans infected with COVID-19 were identified in December 2019, and by mid-February 2021, there were more than 112 million cases reported across the world, with more than two million deaths linked to the disease; and

Whereas, At the same time, the United States (U.S.) continues to lead in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide, with more than 28 million positive cases and 502,000 deaths; and

Whereas, Many countries are struggling to deal with the ever-evolving COVID-19 pandemic, so much so that the United States Department of State (DOS) issued a global “Level 4 - Do Not Travel” warning, as of March 19, 2020, recommending that all U.S. citizens avoid all international travel due to the virus; and

Whereas, While the Department of State lifted this warning in August, 2020, the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to recommend against all travel to more than 150 destinations due to COVID-19; and

Whereas, The possibility of disease transmission remains as the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) continues to conduct international deportations to many of these locations; and

Whereas, Deportees pose a risk to both the U.S. and the countries receiving them, many of which are ill-equipped to handle large-scale COVID-19 outbreaks; and

Whereas, In the case of detained individuals, United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facilities have been rife with COVID-19 clusters, raising the risk that if detained individuals are deported, they could infect individuals in their countries of origin; and

Whereas, In standards governing detention facilities, the CDC has advised that transfers should be restricted unless absolutely necessary, as transfers of detained individuals risk spreading the virus; and

Whereas, Against CDC standards, DHS has transferred and deported thousands of people in its custody to their countries of origin since the onset of the pandemic; and

Whereas, As part of its removal procedure, ICE conducts a “visual screening consistent with its own guidance,” and checks body temperatures prior to boarding airplanes, which are insufficient protocols for determining if a person is infected with SAR-CoV-2; and

Whereas, International advocates including Amnesty International called on former DHS Acting Secretary Chad Wolf to halt deportations for domestic and international public health; and

Whereas, By the end of April 2020, one in five COVID-19 cases in Guatemala were individuals recently deported from the United States, prompting the Guatemalan government to place a cap on the number of deportees from the U.S. it would accept on a weekly basis; and

Whereas, By July 2020, individuals deported to at least eleven different countries tested positive for COVID-19 following removal proceedings; and

Whereas, The former Trump administration coerced countries to assist in the United States’ immigration policy by accepting deportees at the risk of visa denials and access to critical medical supplies; and

Whereas, As of February 2021, 14,087 individuals were detained in ICE custody nationally, and in the New York City-area, there have been over 7,000 new removal orders filed in immigration courts in fiscal year 2020 alone, with a backlog of immigration court cases well over 108,000; and

Whereas, While more than 200 detained individuals in New York City-area ICE facilities have been released on case-by-case basis, ICE continues to deport individuals contravening expert guidance, putting

immigrant New Yorkers at risk of infection, and risking further transmissions internationally; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the United States Department of Homeland Security to halt all deportation proceedings for the length of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a means of restricting the global spread of this disease.

LS14724
EK
2/24/2021