



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0182-2018, **Version:** *

Res. No. 182

Resolution calling upon the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, H.R. 4937, which would provide immigration relief for New York resident Ravidath “Ravi” Lawrence Ragbir and denouncing the unlawful targeting of immigrant rights activists for deportation by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

Council Members Williams, Rodriguez, Menchaca, Richards, Cumbo, Espinal, Dromm, Barron, Rose and Miller

Whereas, In February 2017, the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) issued new immigration enforcement guidelines no longer exempting classes or categories of “removable aliens” from potential detention and deportation; and

Whereas, This directive was a notable departure from previous immigration enforcement policies that prioritized individuals with significant criminal history for deportation, effectively putting all non-citizens at higher risk of deportation; and

Whereas, In Fiscal Year 2017, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) officers apprehended 143,470 immigrants; and

Whereas, More immigrants were arrested in the months immediately following the new DHS guidance than in all of Fiscal Year 2016; and

Whereas, In light of the new directive, there was a significant rise in the immigration arrests of immigrants with no criminal record, as well as those with only minor, low-level offenses; and

Whereas, The directive also led to the increase in apprehension of individuals with final orders of removal who had been allowed to stay in the United States due to their strong ties to their communities and lack of serious criminal history, and conditioned on check-ins in with ICE; and

Whereas, The roughly 900,000 individuals present in the United States under these supervision requirements are once again vulnerable to deportation as reports show an increase in immigrants detained at once routine ICE check-ins; and

Whereas, In the midst of increased immigration arrests and deportations, the Washington Post, the New York Times, and many major media outlets reported a series of high-profile ICE arrests of prominent immigrant rights activists, alleging that they may have been politically motivated; and

Whereas, Ravidath “Ravi” Lawrence Ragbir, activist and Executive Director of the community organization the New Sanctuary Coalition of New York was detained during the course of a regular check-in with ICE, without any prior notice, and despite both his pending challenge to the criminal conviction underlying his deportation order and his tireless work on behalf of immigrants across the nation; and

Whereas, Up until the time of his recent detention, Ravi followed the terms of his deferral of deportation by attending regular check-ins with ICE, paying taxes, and abiding by the law; and

Whereas, Ravi was released on January 29, 2018 when Federal Judge Katherine Forrest of the Federal District Court for the Southern District of New York found his detention without warning unnecessarily cruel, stating “there is, and ought to be in this great country, the freedom to say goodbye;” and

Whereas, Like Ravi, other highly visible immigration activists have been abruptly detained and deported despite their strong ties to the United States and positive contributions to their communities; and

Whereas, Jean Montrevil, activist and co-founder of the New Sanctuary Coalition of New York, was also detained at his regular check-in and quickly deported to Haiti, a country still struggling to recover from recent natural disasters and health epidemics; and

Whereas, Eliseo Jurado, husband to an immigrant rights activist in Colorado, was picked up by ICE at the grocery store and has been placed into deportation proceedings; and

Whereas, Maru Mora Villalpando, an immigrant rights activist in Washington, has been warned by mail from ICE that she may soon be deported; and

Whereas, On February 8, 2018, Ravi filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging that ICE is selectively targeting immigrant rights activists for removal and claiming that such conduct violated his rights under the First Amendment; and

Whereas, Ravi was granted a temporary stay of deportation pursuant to this new First Amendment lawsuit; and

Whereas, Despite his release from ICE custody and temporary deferral of deportation, his profound support from elected officials, faith leaders, and community members and his pending claims for relief, Ravi remains at risk of deportation; and

Whereas, United States Representative Nydia M. Velázquez introduced H.R.4937, legislation that would provide relief for Ravidath Lawrence Ragbir by renewing his eligibility for an immigrant visa or for adjustment of status to permanent residence; and

Whereas, Expansive deportations and the detention of immigrants cause significant harm and trauma as families are torn apart and individuals are often repatriated to countries to which they no longer have strong ties or where their safety may be at risk; and

Whereas, The deportation and detention of highly visible advocates not only has a destabilizing effect on immigrant communities, it can also be construed as politically motivated based on the activists' outspoken positions contrary to current policy; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, H.R. 4937, which would provide immigration relief for New York resident Ravidath "Ravi" Lawrence Ragbir and denouncing the unlawful targeting of immigrant rights activists for deportation by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

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