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Policy Position Paper

Should undocumented immigrants have the same civil rights and employment rights as anyone in the United States? Yes, I believe undocumented immigrants should have the same civil rights and employments rights as many living citizens do in America because just how it begins with the Constitution “We the people of the United; likewise the Bill of the Rights refers to the rights of people, not the rights of citizens”. (Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere, Pg. 178) I believe that undocumented immigrants should have these rights because as the Constitution itself mentions “rights to the people” and they are people, human beings that come to America to have a better way of living a healthy and productive life and it is not only for themselves but also for their families. It has been proven that while undocumented immigrants have been here in America, they are essential in being here in this country, for example, they have contributed to billions of dollars in taxes, Social Security, and Medicare by working in low pay rate jobs like construction, childcare, or maintenance. Yet they face with many difficulties with obtaining citizenship or documentation. On a positive note, most undocumented children benefit from the educational system in the United States and have successful careers that benefits the economy after they graduated from high school

First, as stated in the CAP Citizenship for Undocumented Immigrants Would Boost U.S. Economy Growth “today, 10.2 million undocumented immigrants are living and working in communities across the United States”. (Peri, G. and Zaiour R. – CAP) Undocumented

immigrants have been an essential part in this country as so many of them as mentioned before they come to this country to find a better way of living other than how they live in their country, and they know how successful they can be living in America. They were exclusively essential during the coronavirus pandemic as many of them risk their lives and their families lives for others. “As the country battled the coronavirus pandemic and economic fallout over the past year, the role of undocumented immigrants in ensuring the well-being and safety of all Americans formed part of the national conversation surrounding essential work. Nearly 3 in 4 undocumented individuals in the workforce—an estimated 5 million—are essential workers.” (Peri, G., and Zaiour R. – CAP) How could undocumented individuals not have civil rights and better employment opportunities after putting themselves on the line for people who were affected by the covid-19 virus? These individuals are people who sacrificed themselves and their loved ones by aiding and helping others affected by the virus. They instinctively put themselves at risk to “keep food supply chain running; care for patients in hospitals and support medical systems; maintain the country’s roads and buildings; provide critical care and services for children and the elderly”, (Peri, G., and Zaiour R. – CAP) and many other assistances.

Undocumented immigrants like citizens earn to make a living in America and they deserve the same right as citizens do, yet many Americans feel opposed to the idea of undocumented individuals to having civil and employment rights. During the presidency of Donald Trump, this was an issue that was very much polarized by him, his administration and many citizens agreed with ideology. “Trump instructed U.S. Immigration authorities to set up enforcement of immigration laws and speed deportation if undocumented immigrants.” (Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere, Pg. 177) I don’t understand why President Trump and his administration was against the undocumented immigrants when so many of them take up jobs

that many Americans here in this country do not want to do. According to the Pew Research Center, many Americans don't vision themselves working certain areas of employment, "about three-quarters of (77%) say undocumented immigrants mostly fill jobs U.S. citizens do not want". (Krogstad, J. M., Lopez, M. h. and Passel, J. S) Why is that? Is it because Americans feel that certain jobs are meant only for undocumented immigrants or legal immigrants? In the CAP Release: Millions of Undocumented Immigrants Are Essentials to America's Recovery, New Report Shows it says "undocumented immigrants make up approximately 3.2 percent of the U.S. population, but 4.4 percent of the country's workforce. More than 1.4 million undocumented immigrants work in construction, nearly 1 million undocumented immigrants work in accommodations and food services, 710,000 undocumented workers make up 10 percent of the administrative and support and waste management, and 489,000 undocumented workers in nonpublic administration services" and many others different job positions mentioned.

Many of the jobs that undocumented immigrants are working and are paying taxes, Social Security, and Medicare services that they can't even benefit from because of their legal status in this country. So why are they even paying for these services if they can't benefit from it. And granted it shows their contributing to this country and want to earn the right of becoming a citizen, but I feel that it is unfair if they can't use those benefits. I feel that they need to be allowed to have civil rights and employment rights just as citizens do in this country. As it also states in the CAP Release: Millions of Undocumented Immigrants Are Essentials to America's Recovery, New Report Shows "beyond their presence in the workforce, undocumented workers make a major contributions to the U.S. economy through taxes they pay annually. Undocumented workers and their household pay \$79.7 billion in federal tax contributions and \$41 billion in state and local tax contributions."

I have a question about what was to happen if all undocumented immigrants were deported? What would happen financially and economically? If they were deported “it would have a negative impact, short and long term, on the Social Security funds, which are directly linked to population growth”. (Roberts, N., 2019) In all its fairness this country would really lose a substantial number of contributions that undocumented immigrants contribute to this country. In having these contributions by undocumented immigrants “contributions to the Social Security funds help its finances, especially they are not receiving benefits, explains Monique Morrissey, an economist who focuses on retirement at the Economic Policy Institute, a D.C. based think tank”. (Roberts, N., 2019) Also, I feel that if undocumented immigrants are paying for Medicare they should be entitled to receiving Medicare benefits as well as it serves them to live a longer and healthier lifestyle in receiving such benefits; and as much as it serves to working undocumented immigrant it also serves to children as it states in a report “Inclusive Approach to Immigrants Who Are Undocumented Can Help Families and States Prosper” by Williams, E., Figueroa E., and Tharpe, W. “access to health insurance also improves economic security for children and families... Over the longer term, children with access to health insurance are likelier to complete high school and college and tend to have higher incomes, more wealth, and higher income growth in adulthood”. If this helps undocumented individuals’ children complete their high school diploma and obtain a college degree, why not allow them to have civil rights and employments rights? It’s necessary that they do because they’re striving and dedicated to having a good wealthy life here in America.

Another reason that undocumented immigrants should have civil and employment rights is how the children of the undocumented individuals benefit with the education here in America. I know that for those that are undocumented the country allows for children to receive free public

education from K-12 programs. But what happens when they graduate from high school and they want to continue to have higher education but it's difficult for undocumented individuals to receive any help from the government because of their status in the United States. This is also where undocumented immigrants should be able to have some rights when pursuing to have a higher education. As it states in *The Case for Undocumented Students in Higher Education* "undocumented students are ineligible for federal financial aid, including grants, work study, and government loans... The Urban Institute estimates that 65,000 to 80,000 undocumented student complete high school... when an undocumented student succeeds in transitioning onto higher education. The Pew Hispanic Center found that 61% of undocumented students who arrive in the U.S. before age of 14 onto college, which is considerably lower than the rate for legal permanent residents (76%) or U.S. born residents (71%)". (C. Eusebio and F. Mendoza – *Educators for Fair Consideration*) This is difficult on the many undocumented students that want to pursue higher education to have a good paying jobs and live wealthy not having to depend on services or programs that would help support them, and they should be given civil rights where they are eligible to receive financial aid and governmental loans that would help pay for their college tuition.

Also stated in *The Case for Undocumented Students in Higher Education* article In June 2012 the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) was a federal policy that was created to give an opportunity to about a little over a million of undocumented young individuals that came into the United States before the age 16 years old, lived here in America for five years, and graduated with high school diploma or GED could request to stay in the U.S. and not be deported. The DACA helped many undocumented immigrants not be temporarily deported for an

approximate of two years and given a work permit. But still more was needed as these individuals were here in America and studied.

In doing this policy position paper I learned many things about undocumented immigrants that I didn't know. I learned a lot about myself and my family, and how resilient they are when faced fears, anxiety, and the disadvantages related to social injustice of their civil rights, but still managed to push through no matter what to get what they so desired to accomplish. And although they are civil and employment rights that apply to them like for instance "right to defend against charges and deportation; right to payment for work performed; right to a healthy and safe work; and right to K-12 education". (A. Osaretin – The Arkansas Journal of Social Change and Public Service) it is not the case for undocumented people – not every employer even holds that into account and take advantage of the individuals immigrational status here in America. There is even the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) which "is a federal law created by Congress to establish employment-related rights." (TexasLawHelp.org) As I mentioned before there are many employers that are not going by the FLSA and take advantage of the undocumented population. This topic is very dear to my heart as my family came to this country undocumented and they faced many obstacles and struggles to succeed in this country. I feel that more must be done, and undocumented immigrants deserve to have civil and employment rights as they give so much to this country devoting themselves into their jobs and their contributions that they continuously make to the federal, state, and local taxes.

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