



June 26, 2022

The Hon. _____
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Alex Padilla
United States Senate
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Legal Representation for Immigrants

Dear Members of Congress,

Too often, immigrants are deported not because they legally cannot stay in the United States but simply because they can't afford an attorney. Of the more than 1.25 million people with pending cases in the immigration court system, 500,000 lack representation.

People who are immigrants are our community members. They are our friends, neighbors, colleagues, and family. To leave them without adequate support and representation is immoral and unethical. The US immigration system routinely expects immigrants with no legal representation to navigate a confusing maze of outdated rules and procedures. This process creates an unconscionable risk of wrongly deporting people, tearing families apart, and placing immigrants back in life-threatening circumstances they have tried to escape.

Unlike in the criminal legal system, which guarantees the right to defense counsel under the Sixth Amendment, there is no right to appointed counsel for people facing detention and deportation even though the stakes are just as high.

The SAFE (Safety & Fairness for Everyone) Network is a unique collaboration of government leaders, legal service providers, and community-based advocates all working in partnership to stand up and grow publicly funded, universal representation programs at the state and local levels. Through universal representation, government and community leaders are standing up for their immigrant neighbors and fighting for investments in communities, paving the way for federal action.

I am urging Congress and President Biden to build upon the work of the SAFE Network and create a federally funded legal defense service that provides universal, zealous, and person-centered defense to all immigrants. It would help address systemic inequities within the immigration system, and would represent a safeguard that is already proven, effective, achievable, and has widespread public support.

Sincerely,

(Print Name) _____

Address _____

CC: President Joseph R. Biden