

Senate Judiciary Committee

Hearing on “Keeping Families Together: The President’s Executive Action on Immigration and the Need to Pass Comprehensive Reform”

Questions for the Record

Submitted by Senator Al Franken for

Elizabeth Shuler, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO

Ms. Shuler, in your testimony, you cite studies finding that the President’s immigration action will boost our Gross Domestic Product by \$90 to \$210 billion over the next ten years and increase payroll tax revenues by \$22.6 billion over five years. Nonetheless, some people argue that adding approximately 5 million undocumented immigrants to our country’s workforce would hurt the labor market in America.

- 1. Are not a lot of the undocumented immigrants who will be affected by the President’s immigration action working in the United States already, and doing so without paying taxes or passing criminal background checks?**

An estimated 8 million of the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are currently working. A number of these workers will likely overlap with the estimated almost 5 million that will qualify for the new Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) or expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) programs. The DAPA and DACA programs will allow these individuals to come forward, pay a fee and submit to background checks in order to receive work authorization.

The Social Security Administration estimates about 3 million undocumented workers and their employers paid payroll taxes in 2010.¹ The DAPA and DACA programs will increase the number of workers and employers paying taxes and increase overall tax revenue by allowing qualifying individuals to obtain social security numbers.

- 2. Why would American workers benefit from these people coming out of the shadows and applying for deferred action?**

American workers will benefit from the new DAPA and expanded DACA program because it will allow millions of people to live and work without fear. When an employer can hire an undocumented worker with a wink and a nod and then fire them when they object to unpaid wages or unsafe working conditions, all workers suffer. DAPA and DACA work authorization will give workers a voice on the job and an opportunity to standup to injustice without fear of deportation or being separated from their families.

¹ Oakford, Patrick. *Administrative Action on Immigration Reform: The Fiscal Benefits of Temporary Work Permits*. Center for American Progress (Sept. 2014), 4.

3. How would comprehensive legislative reform, such as the bill passed by the Senate last year, further help American workers?

While DAPA and DACA is an important step, it is important to note that it only provides relief to a fraction of the undocumented population in three year increments. The programs will not eliminate the underground economy, nor cure the addiction of unscrupulous employers to cheap, exploitable labor.

Congress must still pass comprehensive immigration reform, like S. 744, and provide a permanent solution. While not perfect, the Senate bill included a roadmap to citizenship and key provisions that lift up and protect workers' rights. Our broken immigration system is an invitation for employer abuse, and it will continue to lower wages and working conditions for all workers until we finally pass meaningful immigration reform in this country.