

July 1, 2009

The Honorable John T. Morton
Assistant Secretary
United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 12th Street, SW
Washington DC 20536

RE: Mr. Walter E. Lara, A-088-848-500

Dear Mr. Assistant Secretary:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to defer action on the removal of Walter Lara from the United States. Walter was brought to the U.S. from Argentina at the age of three and has lived in the country for 20 years. Due to his immigration status, he has been ordered to leave the country by July 6, 2009.

Throughout his long-time residence in the U.S., Walter has maintained a good moral character and demonstrated a relentless drive to succeed, despite the despairing challenges posed by his immigration status. Walter graduated high school with a 4.7 grade point average, ranking fourth in his class overall. His achievements extend beyond the classroom into his local community, where he completed over 1,000 hours of community service. After high school, Walter attended Miami Dade College, where he graduated with an Associate of the Arts degree in Computer Animation and maintained a 3.7 cumulative grade point average.

Although he dreams of becoming a graphic designer, Walter's immigration status has prevented him from fulfilling his aspiration. On February 17, 2009, Walter was stopped by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and arrested.

Walter's story is part of a broader narrative of the challenges faced by immigrant students who have grown up in the U.S. and embraced American ideals, but are unable to fully contribute to our country because current immigration law does not provide a mechanism for them to do so. His case is a glaring illustration of the problems with our current immigration system, and it is a powerful reminder of the crucial need to advance immigration reform that is consistent with our country's fundamental values and commitment to the rule of law.

Walter has proven to be an invaluable and integral member of his community. Indeed, the enormous outpouring of support he has received from neighbors, teachers, and classmates is evidence of his significant contributions and his extraordinary potential as a leader.

In March, members of Congress reintroduced the "Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act" (S.729) and the "American Dream Act" (H.R. 1751), which would establish a path to legal status and eventual citizenship for immigrant students. Moreover, in recent months, the president and members of Congress have expressed intent to address

comprehensive immigration reform. We anticipate that upcoming proposals in Congress will include measures to address the immigration status of students such as Walter. Therefore, we strongly urge you to defer action on his removal for one year while Congress deliberates solutions for reforming the immigration system. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions about this matter, please direct them to Andres C. Benach, Partner at Duane Morris LLP, at (202) 776-7812.

Sincerely,

Asian American Justice Center
CASA de Maryland
Dreams to be Heard – California State University Northridge
Fair Immigration Reform Movement
First Focus
Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Korean American Resource & Cultural Center
Korean Resource Center
National Council of La Raza
National Immigration Law Center
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium
New York State Youth Leadership Council
Service Employees International Union
United States Student Association