



FIRST FOCUS

MAKING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THE PRIORITY

1110 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 900 | Washington, DC 20005 | T: 202.657.0670 | F: 202.657.0671 | www.firstfocus.net |

June 30, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Honorable Janet Napolitano
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

RE: Walter Enrique Lara, A88-848-500

Dear President Obama & Secretary Napolitano:

I write to urge you to act expeditiously to intervene in the immigration case of Walter Lara, a 23 year old honor student, who is facing deportation to Argentina in 5 days, a country that is virtually unknown to him. Without your assistance, Walter must leave the U.S. by July 6th of this year. There are few, if any, Americans who desire to see him leave. Walter has received an unprecedented outpouring of communications from neighbors, teachers, friends, and church members urging mercy in his case. In fact, in just a few short days, more than 2,000 individuals have signed an on-line petition asking for Walter to be able to remain in the U.S.

Walter has exemplified the ideals that you must work hard, stay in school, and study hard in order to give back to your family and community. Walter attended public schools in Miami his entire life, graduating from Miami Central Senior High School in 2004 with a 4.7 grade point average, due to his success in advancement placement courses. While in high school, he completed 1000 hours of community service by volunteering after hours and weekends in his school to support the magnet program. His volunteer activities ranged from being a spokesperson about the benefits of the magnet program to potential students and their parents to helping with the maintenance of school computers and audio/visual equipment. He also was involved in school sports; including soccer, swim team, and water polo. Upon graduation, after learning that a lack of documentation would prevent him from attending his dream school, the University of Central Florida, Walter's school counselor helped him gain acceptance to the Miami Dade Honors College. In 2006, he earned his Associates of Arts degree in Computer Animation having maintained a 3.7 cumulative grade point average. As part of his student life, Walter continued to give back to his community. He volunteered at a charter school in Miami where he tutored children in mathematics and computers. In his spare time, he remained active in a community soccer league and taught himself how to build computers.

Walter's story is a powerful testament to the importance of passing the DREAM Act, a piece of legislation that you support and would be proud to sign into law. When we do

so, a fine individual such as Walter, who has grown up in this country, has done nothing wrong, and has so much to offer, will have the chance to remain here under the new rules and contribute to our nation. Unfortunately for Walter, absent your help, any such relief will arrive too late. It would be a tragedy for him to be forced from his home, lifelong friends, and family members shortly before changes may be enacted that are specifically designed to help young people in his situation.

As the German pastor and theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer once stated, “the test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.” Under these unique and extreme circumstances, I urge you and your Administration to act now to defer Walter’s removal for one year. This would allow Walter to remain in the U.S. while we deliberate reforms that may well allow him to realize his dreams of U.S. citizenship and a degree from the University of Central Florida.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Bruce Lesley
President, First Focus



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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bruce Lesley
President, First Focus