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Congress One Step Closer to Creating Path to Citizenship for Essential Workers

Washington, DC – The U.S. Senate advanced a key priority of the Essential Ohio coalition that will improve pay and working conditions for a group of Ohio’s essential workers. **The Senate Budget Resolution, which now makes its way to the House, includes a path to citizenship for immigrant essential workers and people with certain forms of temporary immigration status, such as DACA and TPS.**

“Legalization is a win for Ohio communities, families, and the entire economy,” said **Laura Nadal, Community Organizer for Essential Ohio and Justice for Migrant Women.** “By stabilizing the immigration status of these essential workers, we give them more of a voice on the job, and give their children one less thing to worry about. Legalization is the best anti-poverty program our government could design for immigrant families. We call on Ohio’s House delegation to renew bipartisan support for legalization and support the budget resolution on its path to become law.”

One out of every 100 essential workers in Ohio is an undocumented immigrant. An estimated 15,000 work in our state’s food supply chain; in Columbus alone, 12% of the city’s essential workers could benefit from this update in the law. Over 70% of undocumented essential workers have lived in the U.S. for at least 10 years, and 67% live with at least one U.S. citizen.

Sara Hamdi of Englewood, Ohio, is one of them. In addition to working full-time at T-Mobile, she helps support her parents and younger brother, who has Down Syndrome, and cares for her niece and nephew. “Some days it feels like I’m standing in a storm,” she said. With DACA’s precarious status, she put her college dreams on hold. “Living in a multi-status household, you live with the fear of the unexpected. When the path to citizenship becomes law, my family and I will finally be at ease and feel like the rest of our neighbors. We have been here for over twenty-five years, we call this home and we want to feel like we belong.

For more, see “Essential in Ohio: Critical Infrastructure Workers Remain Key to Ohio’s Health and Economic Recovery,” from Policy Matters Ohio and Essential Ohio, at <https://bit.ly/July2021EOH>.

#EssentialOH is powered by ABLE, Justice for Migrant Women, the Ohio Immigrant Alliance, Cleveland Jobs with Justice, La Conexión, Policy Matters, Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center, and Central Ohio Worker Center.

Essential Ohio is part of a national campaign, Always Essential.
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