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Asian American Civil Rights Groups Applaud DHS Relief to DREAMers

WASHINGTON—The Asian American Center for Advancing Justice—Asian American Institute (AAI), Asian American Justice Center (AAJC), Asian Law Caucus (ALC) and Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC)—applauds the Department of Homeland Security's new directive that, effective immediately, allows certain DREAMers to be considered for relief from deportation from the country or from entering into deportation proceedings, as long as they do not present a risk to national security or public safety.

"We applaud President Obama and the administration for affirming the significance of these young people to the United States, and opening the door for them to live the American dream," said Mee Moua, president and executive director of AAJC. "We look forward to working with the administration to implement this new policy. While this is forward movement on our immigration policies, we can't stop here. We call on Congress to provide a pathway to citizenship for DREAMers and all undocumented immigrants."

"This is really a proud moment for our DREAMers and their grassroots efforts," said Tuyet Le, executive director of AAI. "This victory is a great step toward comprehensive immigration reform and could not have been possible without their commitment and advocacy."

Under DHS's directive, young people who demonstrate through verifiable documentation that they meet the following criteria will be eligible to receive deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal and will be eligible to apply for work authorization, on a case-by-case basis:

- 1) Came to the United States under the age of 16;
- 2) Have continuously resided in the United States for a least five years preceding the date of this memorandum and are present in the United States on the date of this memorandum;
- 3) Are currently in school, have graduated from high school, have obtained a general education development certificate, or are honorably discharged veterans of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States;
- 4) Have not been convicted of a felony offense, a significant misdemeanor offense, multiple misdemeanor offenses or otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety;
- 5) Are not over the age of 30.

The directive takes effect immediately. However, USCIS and ICE expect to begin implementation of the application process within 60 days. For individuals who are in removal proceedings and have already been identified as meeting the eligibility criteria, ICE will immediately begin to offer them deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal.

"In the coming weeks and months, we look forward to working with DREAMers and their families to ensure that they receive the full benefits of this historic opportunity, and encourage them to contact our offices for support," said Hyeon-Ju Rho, executive director of ALC.

Today is the anniversary of *Plyler v. Doe*, which established that all children living in the U.S., no matter their immigration status, had the right to a public school K-12 education.

"Millions of immigrants have helped build the United States into the successful nation it is today," said Stewart Kwoh, president and executive director of APALC. "This announcement comes on the 30th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Plyler v. Doe* and will give young immigrants their chance to give back and fully contribute to America."

More information on the new policy can be found on DHS's website, www.dhs.gov. Beginning Monday, individuals can also call USCIS' hotline at 1-800-375-5283 or ICE's hotline at 1-888-351-4024 during business hours with questions or to request more information on the forthcoming process.

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The Asian American Center for Advancing Justice (www.advancingjustice.org) is comprised of the Asian American Justice Center in Washington, DC(www.advancingequality.org), the Asian American Institute in Chicago (www.aaichicago.org), the Asian Law Caucus (www.asianlawcaucus.org) in San Francisco and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (www.apalc.org) in Los Angeles. The mission of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice is to promote a fair and equitable society for all by working for civil and human rights and empowering Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other underserved communities.