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## LAWG Responds to Introduction of U.S. Citizenship Act

**Washington D.C.**— The Latin America Working Group (LAWG) is encouraged by the introduction of the U.S. Citizenship Act in the [House](#) and [Senate](#). By changing the word “alien” to “noncitizen,” the bill humanizes immigrants and their contributions to the United States in addition to proposing a pathway to citizenship for beneficiaries of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS), for which LAWG has long advocated. It also provides a welcome pathway to citizenship for farmworkers. The bill seeks to expand refugee resettlement in the northern countries of Central America so that people fleeing persecution can find protection closer to home and reinstates the Central America Minors (CAM) program that was terminated under the Trump Administration. The bill calls for increased accountability and oversight for Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and proposes engagement with civil society stakeholders along the U.S.-Mexico border. Finally, the bill authorizes \$1 billion a year in a four-year strategy to implement the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America and includes a series of human rights and corruption conditions on 50 percent of the aid to the central governments of the northern countries of Central America. While we support this section’s emphasis on ending corruption and impunity, it still needs work to ensure that assistance truly addresses the root causes of forced migration.

As an organization that advocates for more rights-based U.S. policies towards Latin America and the Caribbean, LAWG staff made the following statements:

**“The U.S. Citizenship Act contains a welcome focus on addressing corruption, impunity, and gender-based violence in the northern countries of Central America. However, it does not go far enough to ensure that this aid package will truly address the root causes of forced migration. Aid must be carefully targeted, avoiding militarized approaches and channeled largely through civil society groups, and coupled with strong diplomacy that shows the United States stands with the citizens working for change, not with corrupt officials or abusive security forces. We need a U.S. strategy with real input from civil society in Central America, not a top-down approach,”** said Lisa Haugaard, co-director of LAWG.

**“The U.S. Citizenship Act proposes permanent protections for immigrant communities such as DACA and TPS beneficiaries and farmworkers, recognizing their longtime contributions to our society. This recognition is a welcome and long overdue step for immigrants that are permanent members of our communities. The inclusion of a pathway to citizenship for these communities is a testament to President Biden’s commitment to**

**ensuring that these families can live dignified lives without fear of deportation. We urge the Congress to advance this piece of the bill immediately and stand by ready to support,”** states Daniella Burgi-Palomino, LAWG co-director.

The Latin America Working Group Education Fund has published comprehensive recommendations for how to change U.S. policy towards the northern countries of Central America. [Serve Your People: A Roadmap for Transforming Relations Between the United States and the Northern Countries of Central America](#) highlights priorities for a new policy that goes far beyond undoing recent attacks on the rights of asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants. It recommends that a new administration start with principled diplomacy against corruption and for human rights and stand with civil society forces for change. This vision calls for supporting equitable development strategies and helping countries address the impact of climate change. The report outlines ways the United States can help respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Americas. These actions must be driven by a new vision that encourages Central American governments to serve their people, with equity and justice, reverting away from enforcement-centric immigration policies to ones that are humane, inclusive, and just.

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