

National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

September 7, 2018

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: NHLA Opposition to H.R. 6691, the Community Safety and Security Act of 2018

Dear Representative:

We write on behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 45 leading national Latino nonpartisan civil rights and advocacy organizations, to strongly oppose H.R. 6691, the Community Safety and Security Act. Our collective goal as a country should be focused on making our communities safe while addressing the rampant over-criminalization and incarceration of the African American, Latino, and immigrant communities. However, this bill furthers bad policy in order to broaden the scope of what is considered a “crime of violence” under federal law, which will trigger harsh and unjustified repercussions. **NHLA recommends a “no” vote on H.R. 6691 and any similar legislation, including amendments and cloture votes. NHLA will closely monitor this matter for inclusion in future NHLA scorecards evaluating Member support for the Latino community.**

The United States has the highest proportion of prisoners per capita of any country in the world. This is the result of a racially skewed criminal justice and law enforcement system that targets minorities and the poor. The Latino population is overrepresented in U.S. prisons, making up 23% of the prison population, while only being 17% of the total U.S. population. Additionally, Latinas are 69% more likely to be incarcerated than White women, a concerning trend considering that the number of women behind bars is increasing at almost double the rate of men. Our organizations know too well that the penalty of legislation that contributes to a culture of mass incarceration and criminalization falls disproportionately on communities of color and immigrant communities.

H.R. 6691 expands those offenses that would be considered a “crime of violence” under 18 U.S.C. § 16. This definition is used across the federal criminal code, including in sentencing provisions and is incorporated into the Immigration and Nationality Act in the definition of an “aggravated felony.” Immigrants determined to have committed an “aggravated felony” are subject to deportation, barred from almost all forms of deportation defenses, and subject to mandatory no-bond detention in mostly all cases. This bill is a precipitous attempt to respond to a 2016 Supreme Court decision without any indication from practical experience that this change is necessary. H.R. 6691 would effectively expand punishment for specific crimes beyond what current sentencing guidelines would dictate without any demonstration of why this expansion is needed or any consideration from the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

If passed, this bill will negatively affect the lives of many immigrants by making them vulnerable to detention and deportation and impeding an eventual path towards naturalization for many individuals. This legislation is in contradiction with the national trend to undertake serious criminal justice sentencing reform and work to eliminate the racial bias that runs through our criminal justice system. We urge you to oppose H.R. 6691, the Community Safety and Security Act of 2018.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alianza Americas
American G.I. Forum
ASPIRA Association
Avance Inc.
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network
Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
Farmworker Justice Green Latinos
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic National Bar Association
Inter-University Program for Latino Research
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
League of United Latin American Citizens
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
Mi Familia Vota
National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
National Association of Hispanic Publications
National Day Laborer Organizing Network
NALEO Educational Fund
National Association of Latino Independent Producers
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Environmental Council
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Institute for Latino Policy
National Latina/o Psychological Association
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
Presente.org
SER Jobs for Progress National
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
UnidosUS
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
U.S.- Mexico Foundation
Voto Latino

Please contact NHLA through Andrea Senteno of MALDEF, at asenteno@maldef.org, or Laura Esquivel of Hispanic Federation, at lesquivel@hispanicfederation.org, with any questions regarding this issue. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Saenz
MALDEF, President and General Counsel
NHLA Chair and Immigration Committee Co-Chair



Jose Calderon
Hispanic Federation, President
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair