



## Break the Chains statement on Biden's immigration proposal

The Biden administration's announcement of its plan to create a path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented workers in this country is a positive, meaningful step in recognizing undocumented people as workers and not criminals. It paves the way for working people of all trades and races - both immigrant and citizen - to come together and organize. This measure is not only in the interest of immigrants, but also in the interest of all workers. It is a bold strike against racism and white supremacy which have intensified divisions within the working class.

For almost 20 years, the [Break the Chains Alliance](#), a network of workers' groups, immigrant-rights advocates, and academics, has called for the adjustment of status for immigrants. This measure is vital in order to reduce the number of the underclass in the U.S. Importantly, Biden's path to citizenship is a break from his liberal predecessors, Obama and Clinton, who criminalized immigrants. The "progressive" call for legalization reinforced the criminalization of immigrants because the legalization of some people means that other people are still marked illegal.

While Biden's proposal for a pathway to citizenship will bring millions of immigrants out of the shadows, it will not eliminate the underclass of workers. As working people we must seize this opportunity now to build on what Biden is calling for by educating everyone about the destructive impact of the employer sanctions provision of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. It was this law that created the underclass of workers with no right to organize or unionize, forcing millions to work under super-exploitative conditions.

Employer sanctions is a misnomer. This law actually helps employers, and hurts workers by criminalizing workers without papers and dividing the working class. This enables employers to super-exploit workers on the margins and to pit us against one another--citizens of any color against immigrants, and documented against undocumented--with the result of driving down working and living conditions for all of us, the working class as a whole. Many of us buy into the system's self-serving lie that other workers are the culprit, that they are the reason that we have no job, or have a bad job that requires us to work too many hours for low pay. As a result, the working class has become so divided that we can not come together to fight for our common needs and interests. That's why we have been getting poorer while the rich get richer. And that's why during this pandemic we see such glaring disparities in health care, education and resource allocation. These divisions among us also allowed Trump to fan the flame of racism and nativism to get into power.

Now it is up to us working people--whether we are immigrants, U.S.-born, people of color or white--to unite to support Biden's effort. We know that we can't rely on Congress. We must build a movement from the bottom up. We as working people are the only ones who can lead the fight to turn the course of history and put our needs and interests first. No more business-as-usual that puts the interests of the 1% first at our expense.

Today, we have an opening to rise up from our day-to-day struggles for survival to demand much more. We have a chance to expose how the system uses laws like employer sanctions to enable the ruling class to steal more of our labor and resources for their profit. Working people must organize across the country to support the call for a pathway to citizenship for immigrant workers--and the next logical step. Let's fight for equal rights for all workers to organize, and to decriminalize undocumented workers by repealing employer sanctions. It's time for us to unite to improve the working and living conditions for all of us.

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