

For Athulya Rajakumar, Graduate of the University of Texas at Austin

At the hearing, you shared that you are pursuing a career in journalism. As the daughter of a journalist, I was discouraged to hear that your immigration status has too often stood as a barrier to your dream of reporting on issues that you care about.

- Can you share more details about the job offer that was rescinded because of your immigration status?
 - Yes, I went through the recruiting process for the position of Associate Producer at a major news organization in Houston. I had two preliminary interviews with the News Director as well as the Assistant News Director. After that, I had a writing test, which assesses my ability to write for TV on various topics under a time constraint. After making it through both interviews and the writing test, in which I did very well and was told that I was an impressive candidate for my experience and age, I went through one final HR interview. Soon after the HR interview, I was put on a phone call with the Assistant News Director and the Head of HR, when they verbally offered me the position. I said I would be delighted to accept, and proceeded to explain my visa situation. Their immediate change in tone threw me off. Up until then, they had verbalized about how perfect I would be for the position, and how eager they were to see my talents grow at their station, but as soon as I told them of my immigration status, they were upset that I had not mentioned it before and no longer thought I was the right fit. I tried to explain that my credentials remained the same and I am qualified for the position, and that I would not even need them to sponsor me for my work visa. If I were to find a third party staffing company that would sponsor me, all I would ask them would be their support in the filing process for my H-1B visa. The company said they would discuss it with their immigration team and get back to me. They never got back to me, and the following week, I reached out to them and they said they had not heard back from their immigration department because they had bigger things to deal with, and it was pretty clear they were withdrawing their offer. They said that investing their time and efforts into someone who could not guarantee that they could work past the end of this year would not be a smart move on the company's part.
 - This experience was extremely disheartening, and just another example of how my talents, experience, and my life in the United States, are constantly undermined by my immigration status. If I had revealed my visa situation at the very first interview, I may not have made it past the first round, and revealing it at the end, even after I had proven my skills and prowess, still didn't guarantee me the position. While I was grateful to be granted a work visa after almost two decades in this country, I soon came to know of its constraints - and the way its constant temporary nature has affected my ability to work in my field of education or build a career.
- What steps can Congress take to ensure that you, and the thousands of young people who are similarly situated, have the stability needed to pursue your chosen career?
 - Something Congress can do for people like me is create a mechanism that protects children who are raised and educated in the United States on long-term dependent

visas to be able to stay without needing to hop from one temporary visa to another; the bill S. 2753 America's Children Act allows for this. Current laws do not protect or have any mechanisms in place that allows long-term residents like me to apply for a green card, even if we were raised here with a documented status. This in turn ends up affecting our job prospects after graduation as well. We are bound by the constraints of our status. For example, the H-1B cap, a purely lottery-based system, does not take into account the years I've spent living here. Children who are raised and educated as dependents of visa holders should be protected from aging out of the system.