

Congressional Testimony

**Senate Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and Border Security**

“The Economic Imperative for Enacting Immigration Reform”

Written Statement of Dr. Puneet Arora

Delivered on July 26, 2011 at 10:00 AM

Dirksen Senate Office Building

Washington DC

Introduction and Thanks

Chairman Schumer, Ranking Member Cornyn, and distinguished members of the United States Senate Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee, my name is Dr. Puneet Arora, and I am deeply honored to provide the following testimony on behalf of Immigration Voice and the roughly five hundred thousand highly skilled immigrants and their families waiting for permanent residence in America. I thank you deeply for the privilege to present my views, for the opportunity to learn firsthand the workings of the American democratic system, and for your time and attention to this issue of significance, not just for me and those like me, but for our American economy, our domestic workforce, and our current and future U.S. business owners.

As I mentioned, I am here on behalf of Immigration Voice, a national grassroots non-profit organization of over 60,000 active highly skilled immigrants. In December of 2005, Immigration Voice was founded by Aman Kapoor upon a simple goal: create awareness for highly skilled immigration system with expanded and accelerated opportunities for permanent residence for the competitive advantage of American businesses and economic advantage of the United States. To that end, Immigration Voice has met with countless legislators, agency personnel, and administration officials in Washington, DC and around the country in an effort to both educate and better understand the system we utilize for green cards. I became involved with Immigration Voice in 2006 through its advocacy in support of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill sponsored by the late Senator Ted Kennedy and Senator John McCain. Our membership includes highly skilled immigrants from all walks of life, most of whom are still in the process of receiving their green cards with the rest either lawful permanent residents or U.S. citizens who have been through the same process and are motivated from their experiences to help others.

What immediately struck me about my fellow Immigration Voice members was the level of commitment and desire we all have to obtain the American dream. One common theme connects all the members of our coalition: we view ourselves as future Americans. We want nothing more than to participate in the U.S. economy freely—to start businesses and change jobs without the fear of harassment or punitive measures, such as starting over in the green card line. Above all else, we want the roots we have laid in America to take hold permanently. All of us already live and work in the United States. Many of us have children that are American citizens by birth. We earn good salaries, and we pay our taxes. We create opportunities for employment and invent valuable products for U.S. companies to sell in America and around the world. We are not asking for thanks. We simply want a real place in America—a permanent place that allows us to live and invest freely, obtain a driver's license in a reasonable time, apply for insurance, and qualify for a mortgage.

My hope in testifying before you today is not only to further expand upon the systemic problems faced by highly skilled immigrants, especially those of us who come to America from large countries, but also to bring home to you the personal goals and ambitions of a group of future Americans you commonly refer to by nonimmigrant terms like H-1bs, Ls, NIWs, and TNs. We are more than letters, numbers, job titles, and economic facts. We are dedicated individuals with real lives, real families, and a real desire to be of value to this country. To that end, I hope my testimony will serve that purpose today.

Before I continue to the substance of my presentation, I would offer one final word of introduction to my testimony for purposes of clarity. I am not here to argue for more overseas recruitment of foreign born workers. I am as aware as any member of the American workforce that we face record unemployment as part of our severe and ongoing economic downturn. My view is that the market is the best determinant of the need for highly skilled immigrants in our country. Clearly, immigrants have added economic value to the U.S. A recent study by the Partnership for a New American Economy found that 40% of the Fortune 500 companies 2010 were founded in whole or in part by immigrants to America or their children. These immigrants came from all walks of life, but they share one thing in common. Not one of them could have started their business today without a green card or the help of a U.S. citizenship. This is the great opportunity cost we face. Every day that highly skilled immigrants live without green cards is one more day they are not buying homes or starting new companies and creating new jobs. My sole interest in providing testimony today is to help shed light on the highly skilled immigrants who have already given a large portion of their adult lives to the U.S. economy and who continue to wait for their turn to fully live the American dream.

My American Story

I was born in New Delhi, India in 1972. My home town was a large metropolitan national capital city. From the earliest memories I can recall, I always had an interest in science. Through my years in school, I participated in science symposia and won awards on numerous occasions for my presentations, including a prestigious young astronomer award. As a teenager, I was recognized with a gold medal by the Department of Biotechnology for the Government of India and given a 3 year scholarship for ranking among the top 10 biology students in the country. In 1989, I was awarded a rare perfect score on the biology portion of the national high school exit examinations.

India was a growing economy even then, but the opportunities for advancement were very limited by U.S. standards. Placement at top Universities was extremely competitive. Entrance to medical school meant taking extensive and rigorous examinations with very low rates of acceptance. My only option was to study hard, and through dedicated efforts, I was accepted to India's flagship medical college, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi, the top medical college in the country every single year since surveys have existed in India. Admission was based on an entrance test that was taken by nearly 100,000 candidates, all competing for 34 positions, an acceptance rate of less than 0.01%.

After obtaining my medical degree, I reached a crossroads. I knew I would continue to post graduate residency training in Internal Medicine, but I did not know where. Driven by a desire to see the world and obtain advanced medical training in the West, I applied for graduate positions in the United States. In 1996, I was fortunate to be accepted to a post graduate medical residency program at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine in Springfield and thus began my journey to America and through the odyssey known generally as the highly skilled immigration system.

I entered the U.S. immigration system on a J-1 exchange visa, which is commonly used for post graduate medical training. It seems appropriate at this point to clarify that highly skilled immigrants enter the U.S. directly on many types of visas. My colleagues at Immigration Voice almost all began their journey

to green card on educational and/or temporary employment visas such as the H-1b. As the name suggests, these visas are meant to be used for short periods of time, and with that in mind, certain important restrictions apply to the employment of immigrants on these visas. These restrictions and regulations are the heart of the problem for highly skilled immigrants seeking permanent residence, and because of “Per Country Limits” (an issue I address later in my testimony). This is especially true for those immigrants from India, China, the Philippines, and Mexico, the countries that supply the vast majority of our highly skilled, highly educated foreign talent.

After completing my residency in 1999, I was offered a fellowship in Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism at the New York University School of Medicine, which I gladly accepted thus moving from the land of Lincoln to one of the world’s greatest cities, where I worked the next 2 years at Bellevue Hospital and the VA Medical Center. In 2003 I began a fellowship in Advanced Diabetes at the Mayo Clinic and Graduate School in Rochester, MN, the greatest center for Endocrinology in the country and perhaps the world. This was a dream come true. My educational journey ended with my second American Board certification in Internal Medicine in 2009—my first had been in Endocrinology in 2001. For good measure, I also certified as a physician nutrition specialist and earned a Masters of Biomedical Sciences in Clinical Research from the Mayo Graduate School in 2005.

From 1996 to 2003, I remained on a J-1 visa. Although I have heard far worse stories from my colleagues at Immigration Voice, my own experience on the J-1 was mostly uneventful barring the constant need to renew my the visa and obtain a special stamp on every visit to my native country. Despite its common use by students in advanced medical programs of 2 to 3 years in duration, the J-1 visa is designed by law to expire annually. The underlying condition of the visa stipulated that I must either return to my home country for a period of 2 years after my training or obtain a waiver based on service for a period of 3 years in a medically underserved area of the United States or its territories. From a visa perspective, I was fortunate that my medical interest aligned with the latter of the two options. As an endocrinologist and diabetologist, my area of professional interest encompasses a growing and emergent public health problem with a current and projected shortage of trained medical professionals. I was thus able to qualify for a waiver.

Not every foreign STEM student is so fortunate. Under both F-1 and J-1 visas, foreign students being trained in our top universities are told that they cannot at any time declare their intent to remain in the U.S. beyond their education—in immigration speak, this is called a prohibition on “dual intent”. In spite of these restrictions, I always knew I wanted to be a permanent resident in America. I had been trained in the best medical schools in our country, yet the law said in order for the U.S. to benefit from my training, I had to keep my desire to remain in America as a professional a secret. I clearly remember thinking at the time that I am getting the best education in the world at the best U.S. Universities. Half the people in my classes are foreign born and are also receiving top training. When we graduate, the fastest growing industries in America will eagerly recruit us, because they cannot find all the workers they need domestically—and the U.S. government is telling us to tell these U.S. employers we plan to use our skills somewhere other than America.

My professional life began in 2003, when I entered clinical practice with Health Partners Medical Group in St. Paul, MN, at the Regions Hospital, formerly Ramsey County Medical Center, and its adjoining clinics, having obtained a J-1 waiver and an H-1b visa with the support of the State of Minnesota under the Conrad 30 program. Regions Hospital being a major teaching hospital for the University of Minnesota Medical School, I took up significant teaching and mentoring responsibilities in addition to my regular physician duties and was appointed Assistant Professor of Medicine. As a practicing physician in a medically underserved area with a substantial population of indigent patients, I qualified for a National Interest Waiver, putting me on a clear path towards a green card. I was elated. My dream of permanent residency seemed on track and within reach in a few years. However, I soon learned that USCIS had adopted an excessively restrictive interpretation of the 2001 NIW statute, prohibiting my consideration. It took a lawsuit brought by other immigrants and their benefactors to overturn the agency decision in 2007, finally breaking the logjam and allowing me to file for and receive the National Interest Waiver for which I should have qualified years before.

In late 2008, I was offered an opportunity to return to my clinical research roots as a Clinical Research Medical Director at Amgen, the world's largest biotechnology company that discovers, develops, manufactures, and delivers innovative human therapeutics and is dedicated to helping people fight serious illness. Even with my National Interest Waiver, I was only able to accept this offer again due to fortunate circumstances. Because of a quirk in the visa bulletin posted July of 2007, the Department of State kindly allowed all those in line for a green card to file for adjustment of status. This adjustment provided me with the opportunity to gain work authorization, without which the restrictions on transferring my H-1b work visa would have meant a year's wait before I could accept Amgen's offer—assuming I was lucky enough to be selected in the H-1b lottery. Without this very brief window of relief, it is doubtful my employer and I would have been able to come together to our mutual benefit.

As for my family, people often overlook the fact that many highly skilled immigrants are accompanied to America by highly educated spouses. Over the last decade and a half, my wife completed both a MEd and PhD in Education from Vanderbilt University and the University of Minnesota respectively. She has taught at the Mayo High School in Rochester, MN, and worked with Oxfam on grassroots education initiatives. She is writing, updating, and revising a textbook for teacher education, and she volunteers significant time to the local public school. Another commonly overlooked fact is that because highly skilled immigrants typically live in the U.S. on nonimmigrant visas for years—over a decade if you happen to be from India and China—many of our children are born U.S. citizens even while we are not. We now have 2 young daughters, both born in the United States. We have lived here for 15 years, and call America our home. My green card application meanwhile continues to collect dust somewhere deep in bowels of the U.S. immigration system, where it was swallowed up years ago. I will dedicate the rest of my testimony to explaining in greater detail why this is the case for me and so many other immigrants waiting in the employment-based backlog and what this committee can do to improve our immigration system to the benefit of all current and future Americans.

Employment-based Green Cards are Not H-1bs

Before we discuss numbers, the key issue in the employment-based backlog, I want to address a point of confusion among many of your colleagues that persists to this day. For many years, whenever Members of Congress spoke of highly skilled immigrants, they often used the term “H-1b” interchangeably—in much the same way a person might ask for a Kleenex when they mean a tissue or a Coke when they mean a soft drink. Very few policymakers in DC seemed to know anything about the employment-based visa system, and even fewer still could say with any certainty the difference between an H-1b visa and a green card. To most lawmakers, a highly skilled immigrant was an H-1b and nothing more. There are probably many reasons for this misunderstanding. In the early days of the tech boom in the mid to late 1990s, the U.S. technology industry was growing so fast that U.S. tech companies could hardly keep pace with demand. The decline in STEM education in the U.S. had been well documented since the early 1990s, but the spike in demand for qualified technologists created by the growth of companies like Microsoft, Intel, and Oracle brought home the problem in new ways. The emerging U.S. technology sector needed quick access to tens of thousands of highly skilled immigrants to meet labor shortages in real time. The H-1b, as a temporary visa and therefore easier to procure than a green card, became the workhorse of this effort and has been closely identified with the emergence of the technology economy and foreign technologists ever since.

The tragic side effect of the extreme focus on the H-1b is that little attention has been paid to the real needs of highly skilled immigrants, primarily employment-based green cards. America’s STEM shortage has proved to be anything but temporary. In the early days of the H-1b program, many highly skilled immigrants were kept in their temporary status for several years, as there seemed to be a persistent belief that growth would drive demand for STEM education among U.S. students and foreign workers would no longer be needed. Today, most major U.S. employers file for employment-based green cards for their highly skilled immigrants immediately upon hiring. This is especially pronounced for my colleagues on H-1bs. The truth is the H-1b program for many highly skilled immigrants—especially from India and China—is a sore subject. My colleagues do not blame the visa. An H-1b was meant to be a temporary work visa, not a placeholder in the green card line. The visa does allow many Immigration Voice members to live and work in America, but the restrictions exact a heavy toll professionally and personally on these immigrants overtime. If there is blame to be placed, it belongs to a singular chokepoint in the green card system, the result primarily of inadequate numbers and a poorly conceived policy known as per country limits.

I would offer one final thought on misperceptions about our highly skilled immigration system. Even in the early Wild West days of the U.S. tech boom, there was a deep disconnect between what policymakers believed about highly skilled immigrants and what highly skilled immigrants believed about themselves. For some policymakers, every highly skilled immigrant was Albert Einstein—this I can tell you from personal experience is not true. Others seemed to view all highly skilled immigrants as foreign versions of Bill Gates—strictly interested in making sure “spellcheck” continues to work as you type away on your computer. As you can see from my testimony, I am not a computer scientist or computer engineer. Many highly skilled immigrants are and for good reason, but a significant number are not. In contrast, highly skilled immigrants see themselves simply as individuals with deeply marketable skills in

America's largest and fastest growing sectors—highly skilled STEM fields. We are well educated, smart, and motivated, but in most cases no more so than our U.S. colleagues. We are not here because we are better than American workers—we are here because there are not enough qualified (a very important distinction) American workers to meet all the specific demands of America's growing highly skilled industries.

The Unintended Consequences of Per Country Limits

The wait for an employment-based green card is never easy. The uncertainty that accompanies the process is a constant source of concern and stress for immigrants. I have been waiting many years for my green card, and I doubt a day goes by that I do not worry about where my application stands vis-à-vis the end of the line. While everyone waits, a little known fact about the employment-based green card system is that some wait significantly longer than others. The reason for this discrepancy seems to be an arbitrary policy decision at the time the employment categories were created that limits the total number of green cards issued to individuals born in any one country to 7%. We can find no policy rationale for this cap other than the same limit exists for the family green card system. In the context of family, such a limit seems to make sense, where social diversity is part of the policy rationale for the system. In contrast, the employment system exists solely to serve the needs of the U.S. economy—economic necessity is in fact the first test for whether or not an individual qualifies for an employment-based green card.

Given half the world's population lives in two countries—India and China—and that these countries supply the vast majority of highly skilled immigrants to the U.S., the impact of the 7% per country limit has been profound. If per country limits are left in place, highly skilled immigrants from India will quite literally be waiting decades, most on temporary visas that limit their job mobility and prevent them from buying homes, starting businesses, and earning two incomes. This is an extremely demoralizing prospect for men and women who come to America believing their skills are valued and will be welcomed. The problem of waiting—and especially waiting longer than others for no other reason than being born in a populous country—is easily the number one cause of attrition and reverse “brain drain” by Indian and Chinese immigrants.

To illustrate the impact, look no further than Kunal Bahl, an engineer from the University of Pennsylvania with an MBA from Wharton who started a company while in college that now sells to 3,000 U.S. stores. In 2007, when his H-1b visa ran out, Kunal simply gave up on the U.S. immigration system and sought greener pastures back home in India, where he founded snapdeal.com. Kunal's company now earns over \$20 million in annual revenue and is on track for an estimated \$100 million. He already employs 400 workers in India and is hiring approximately 70 more every month. At a time when the U.S. needs jobs desperately, job creators like Kunal are leaving America for no other reason than our immigration system. While we have few hard statistics on these types of opportunity costs, most immigration experts agree the number of foreign-born workers returning to India and China annually is on the rise and in the tens of thousands. The Chinese Ministry of Education estimates the number of former emigrants who returned to China last year was a record 134,800, up 25% from 108,000 in 2009. As President Obama highlighted in a recent speech, Intel, Google, Yahoo and eBay

were all founded by immigrants. Knowing what we know today, would we not do whatever it took to keep these innovators in America?

Per country limits have no place in the employment-based system. Talent is talent no matter where an immigrant is from, and the limitations on access to employment-based green cards are best determined by the needs of the market, not an arbitrary cap. The cap in many ways is the antithesis of the market, enforcing a smooth distribution of talent globally that does not match up with reality. On its face, the idea that a country with billions of people should be limited to the same number of employment-based green cards as a country with only millions is absurd. Regardless, capping the system based on the country of origin makes no sense if the goal is to get the best the world can offer. For that reason, Immigration Voice supports eliminating the per country cap altogether in favor of a “first come, first serve system”, where all employment-based immigrants have the same wait and bear the same burden of a system short on green cards.

Green Card Numbers are the Problem and Solution

From the perspective of a future American, the single biggest problem with the employment-based immigration system is clear: there are not enough employment-based green cards to meet today’s demand. The U.S. immigration system provides 140,000 green cards for employment-based immigrants every year. This accounts for approximately 16% of all green cards awarded annually, a significant number until you look more closely. The reality is many temporary visas, like the H-1b, which is capped at 85,000 visas a year, allow immigrants to enter the country with whole families. However, when the time comes for permanent residence, each member of the family must also receive an employment-based green card. In short, we estimate that more than half of the 140,000 employment-based green cards go to family members. For countries impacted by per country limits like India, China, the Philippines, and Mexico, the visa usage by family members does nothing but compound the already extremely long waits, at times causing backlogged individuals to actually move backwards in line—something commonly known in immigration circles as retrogression.

More disturbingly, we know a portion of the 140,000 green cards, as provided by Congress annually to the employment-based categories, have often gone unused despite the excessive demand in the system. We believe this is primarily the result of inefficiencies in the application process which continues to be excessively reliant on paper-based methods. Regardless of the cause, if USCIS and the agencies responsible for overseeing the green card system fail to process applications in time, the allotment of visas expire and are lost. The USCIS ombudsman estimates that between the family and employment-based categories, over 300,000 green cards have been wasted in this manner. We believe this number to be higher and that up to 325,000 thousand have been left unprocessed in the employment-based categories alone. The deeply frustrating aspect of the loss of visas due to inefficiency is that after years of waiting, the government should have little doubt as to who is next in line (yet another negative consequence of per country limits). Highly skilled immigrants plan their life around the green card process when the agency calls. It should not be too much to ask that the agency take time to plan for effective and efficient green card processing as well.

When it comes to the issues of numbers in the employment-based system, I believe it bears repeating that the shortage of available employment-based green cards remains the single biggest challenge to highly skilled immigrants. Combined with per country limits, the inadequate supply of green cards represents a significant hurdle to job mobility, professional growth, career advancement, promotions and even the education of our children if not born in the United States. In some cases, young children become adults by the time green cards are available to an applicant's family. In these cases, the adult child is no longer eligible and may find themselves separated from their families for an extended period or even permanently.

The Path Forward: Run! Don't Walk

We often hear from policymakers that the goal of the employment-based immigration system should be to welcome those individuals who can contribute immediately to the growth and prosperity of the American economy. My fellow highly skilled immigrants and I appreciate the sentiment, but we do not expect the "red carpet" treatment. We know there must be reasonable restrictions on the flow of immigrants to America. We know that reasonable protections must be in place to make sure that U.S. workers are not displaced unknowingly by those seeking permanent residency in the United States. We know these restrictions and protections add time to our wait for green cards, and we accept this process as the price for entry on a permanent basis to the U.S. We are future Americans, and we share an interest in making sure that foreign workers coming to the U.S. are truly needed.

What my fellow immigrants and I find deeply frustrating about the wait for green cards is that the majority of time spent in line has little or nothing to do with processes aimed at protecting American workers. We are not held in limbo for years to ensure that jobs that should go to Americans are protected. On the contrary, for countries impacted by per country limits, most of the highly skilled immigrants waiting for green cards have long since been deemed additive to the U.S. economy through a rigorous market test known as "labor certification". Inadequate numbers are the primary delay in the system, and because highly skilled immigrants are forced to wait on temporary visas, many of the negative externalities raised by critics, such as incentives to pay low wages and fear of leaving abusive employers lest you be removed from the country, are amplified in the system.

In order to help move the process along and remove the negative consequences for both immigrants and the U.S. economy of a permanent workforce on restrictive temporary visas, I recommend the following changes be adopted as soon as possible by Congress:

1. Eliminate per country limits—as previously discussed, this is as much an issue of fairness as it is an issue of reducing wait times. Currently, highly skilled immigrants from the largest countries in the world bear the full burden of this negative externality. Removal of these caps will distribute wait times among all immigrants, making the system fair as a "first come, first serve" process and alleviating market distorting pressures on Indian and Chinese immigrants stuck for years on temporary visas. This change is a simple, technical fix requiring no additional green card numbers be issued.

2. Recapture previously authorized but unused green card numbers—also, discussed above, recapturing previously authorized but unused green cards will allow Congress to help clear the employment-based backlog without authorizing any additional visas. These visas were already provided by law, but due in many cases to bureaucratic inefficiencies, they were lost. Recapturing is an option that requires no major changes to the immigration system.
3. Raise the employment-based green card cap to 290,000 visas per year—raising the cap on employment-based green cards is the most obvious solution to the employment-based problem. While this option may be the least politically acceptable among certain leaders in Congress, it is also the simplest with clear and absolute caps.
4. Allow for job portability, without losing the worker’s place in the green card line, on the filing of an application for labor certification—this issue is also touched upon above. Highly skilled immigrants waiting for green cards are trapped on temporary visas. Even though the law allows for certain temporary visa holders, such as H-1bs, to change jobs, many immigrants opt not to do so for a simple reason: changing employers under the current system means starting over in the green card line. For highly skilled immigrants deeply impacted by per country limits, the incentives to remain with their current employer at any cost are high. Allowing highly skilled immigrants to change jobs once they have filed for green cards without losing their place in line will empower these workers to pursue their maximum employment potential, adding greatly to morale and further protecting these immigrants from potential abuses.
5. Exempt certain categories from the employment-based caps—as noted in my testimony already, family members use up a significant portion of employment-based green cards. Other categories of highly skilled immigrants may also deserve special consideration when applying for employment-based green cards. To this end, I recommend exempting from the employment-based caps individuals who meet the following criteria:
 - STEM degree holders with an advanced degree from a U.S. university
 - Spouses and children of employment-based immigrant visa recipients
 - National Interest Waiver recipients
 - Physicians that provide designated services in medically underserved areas

These are but a few examples of the creative ways in which our green card system can provide additional numbers by incentivizing positive behaviors that benefit the country and/or address the intended spirit of the law.

6. Provide for the roll-over of unused immigrant visa numbers to the following fiscal year—given the loss of visas due to bureaucratic inefficiencies on an annual basis, rolling visas forward is the best way to ensure that recapture is an imbedded principle of the employment-based system.

A Closing Thought on the Question of American Jobs

Some in Congress—perhaps on this subcommittee—believe that in certain cases highly skilled immigrants are being used to displace U.S. workers. I say if you have evidence of this, you must prosecute them. If the problem is systemic, fix the law. The fact that fraud and abuse in the temporary programs are by far the exception rather than the rule matters not to me. People must trust a system to believe in it. The actions of a few bad actors have not only eroded the reputation of the H-1b visa program, their actions have undermined trust in highly skilled immigrants themselves. To rebuild this trust, we must eliminate the bad actors. The law provides for ample enforcement in nonimmigrant programs—I urge you to use that power to restore faith in a highly skilled immigration system that can and will continue to benefit the U.S. economy and the American workforce. Our excessive reliance on temporary visas is of course largely to blame for the enforcement issues within the programs. Adopting the employment-based green card reforms I have outlined above is the surest way to refocus the attention of immigration officials on the relatively small but very damaging problem of H-1b fraud.

As to the overall question of displacement, anyone who argues that there is no shortage of qualified highly skilled workers in certain STEM fields has no practical knowledge of the STEM industry. People are not perfectly substitutable, and empirical studies will never explain fully what qualifies one worker over another. What we do know is that there is no prize for second place in the global economy, and there is no place for good enough in cutting edge technology. When a company determines it wants the best person for a job regardless of where they are from, that company in many cases is doing so as an alternative to moving jobs overseas. As we are future Americans, we are tied to the success of the US economy and the jobs that are created here. America's continued prosperity and the availability of jobs in the future, especially for our children, are of enormous importance to us. I believe the vast majority of highly skilled immigrants add far more value than they take from our economy. All we ask for in return is the opportunity to make permanent our place in the country where we work, raise our children, and call our home.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the privilege of testifying before you today. I am truly honored to have this opportunity to share my story and my views on highly skilled immigration with you. I am also honored to testify on behalf of my fellow Immigration Voice friends and colleagues, all of whom are future Americans. Everyone could tell a different story of how they got here, but our coalition comes together because we share a deep desire to make America our permanent home. I believe America is the greatest country on earth. We have freedom. We have opportunity, and today we have the advantage in emerging industries. With a serious commitment to reforming our employment-based green card system, I believe highly skilled immigrants can help America return to prosperity, creating jobs and growing our economy through innovation. I hope you will consider the recommendations I have made today, and I'll look forward to our continued work together.