



STRONGER COMMUNITIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

HEADQUARTERS

Raul Yzaguirre Building  
1126 16th Street NW, Suite 600  
Washington, DC 20036-4845

☎ 202.785.1670

📠 202.776.1792

🌐 unidosus.org

May 9, 2024

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Chairwoman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

On behalf of [UnidosUS](https://www.unidosus.org), I write to urge you to support a Fiscal Year 2025 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Appropriations bill that will help reduce the significant backlog of immigration cases and make our immigration system more humane.

UnidosUS is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that serves as the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Since 1968, we have challenged the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos through our unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an Affiliate Network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico. We believe in an America where economic, political, and social progress is a reality for all Latinos, and we collaborate across communities to achieve it.

One of the most pressing issues facing our nation's immigration system is the significant backlog of cases. The Department of Justice (DOJ) plays a vital role in managing programs that can help alleviate this problem, particularly through the Recognition and Accreditation (R&A) program, which aims to increase access to competent legal representation for low-income individuals in immigration proceedings. As of April 16, 2024, 2468 Accredited Representatives serve at 866 recognized organizations nationwide.

**We urge you to provide \$3.5 million for the Recognition and Accreditation program at the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR) within the DOJ.** This critical funding will enable EOIR to increase staff capacity and efficiently process the growing number of applications from nonprofit organizations providing essential immigration legal services. There is increasing momentum among legal service organizations to train and hire more DOJ Accredited Representatives to meet the immense need for affordable, quality immigration legal services. However, without adequate funding, EOIR lacks sufficient resources to support the needs of non-profit legal service providers utilizing the R&A program and cannot adjudicate applications in a timely manner.

The R&A program has operated for decades on a very low budget internally allocated by the DOJ. In recent years, severe underfunding and understaffing resulted in a significant backlog, leaving legal advocates unable to receive authorization to practice. As a result, nonprofit organizations had to cut back on critical legal services, undermining the very purpose of the R&A program. Although the DOJ successfully eliminated the backlog with temporary dedicated staff, dedicated funding is also necessary to guarantee the long-term consistency, professionalism, and effectiveness of this valuable program.

Moreover, investing in the R&A program will yield long-term benefits for our nation. By ensuring that low-income immigrants have access to qualified legal assistance, we can help secure fair and just outcomes in immigration proceedings, reduce unnecessary detention and deportation costs, and promote the integration of immigrants into our communities. This, in turn, will strengthen our economy, bolster our workforce, and uphold our nation's values of due process and equal justice under the law.

By supporting the DOJ in this manner, you will be instrumental in creating a more efficient and equitable immigration system that benefits all Americans. We urge you to prioritize this critical funding request as you craft the Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations bill. Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to advancing the well-being of our nation's diverse communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Rodriguez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eric Rodriguez  
Senior Vice President  
Policy and Advocacy  
UnidosUS