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PRESIDENT OBAMA'S SPEECH

**Good Move Toward Comprehensive Immigration Reform,
Enforcement Concerns Persist**

FIAC applauds President Obama's commitment to enacting comprehensive immigration reform. The president's welcome framework for reform would: provide a legal workforce for farmers, keep families together, legalize young immigrant talent through the Dream Act and allow unauthorized immigrants who play by the rules to earn citizenship.

We are concerned, however, that current enforcement policies and mass deportations snare many of the families and youths who would otherwise be eligible for legalization under the immigration reforms envisioned by President Obama.

Just this week, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) expanded its Secure Communities program from 24 counties to all 67 counties in Florida. This program checks fingerprints from every person arrested as soon as they are booked into jail, no matter how minor the infraction or whether they later win in court. Not surprisingly, Secure Communities statistics show 90 percent of those flagged were not the "the most dangerous criminals" that are ICE's top priority.

Most of the people FIAC sees in immigration detention in South Florida have no criminal record or only minor infractions, such as driving without a license, loitering or improper window tints. One detainee's charge from Collier County stemmed from stealing a small package of sunflower seeds.

"President Obama is right to call for bipartisan support of constructive immigration reforms that include a fair pathway to legal status," said Cheryl Little, Florida Immigrant Advocacy Executive Director. "Until such reform is enacted, his administration should reject enforcement policies that end up detaining and deporting thousands of worthy immigrants who would be eligible to earn legal status under his proposal."

Our dysfunctional immigration system does not serve this country's families or businesses. Attempts by states to impose punitive immigration laws only make matters worse. Bringing millions of unauthorized immigrants out of the shadows will free law enforcement to target the nation's real security threats and make the country safer. Congress must act on comprehensive reform to ensure the United States continues to prosper in a global economy.

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About Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center (FIAC) is one of the nation's largest non-profit immigration law firms. Since its founding in 1996, FIAC has closed more than 65,000 cases. This direct service work informs its broader policy work, positioning FIAC as a powerful national advocate for immigrants' rights and a leader in the immigration field. FIAC influences national policy; successfully litigates or otherwise challenges patterns of abuse; and takes a leading role in educating the public about the impact that immigration laws and directives have on our communities. FIAC is dedicated to protecting and promoting the basic rights of immigrants.

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