

## Anthropology Action Network for Immigrants and Refugees Statement

### Provide Economic Justice for Immigrant Families Third Stimulus Must Include All Taxpayers, Regardless of Legal Status

As President-elect Joe Biden considers the [provisions of a third economic stimulus bill](#), he should start by rectifying the exclusions of mixed-status families in the first two stimulus bills. [Undocumented immigrants are overrepresented](#) in jobs at the frontline of the pandemic, but neither previous stimulus bill provides them any relief. Making matters worse, both bills have also excluded the children of undocumented immigrants—including [2.2 million US citizens](#). The [third stimulus](#) that the Biden Administration is drafting must provide immigrant families with relief by including all taxpayers, regardless of legal status.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act that President Trump signed into law on March 27 deliberately withheld economic relief from undocumented immigrants, their spouses, and their dependents. In an act of cruelty, the CARES Act excluded all those who file taxes with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)—a number the Internal Revenue Service grants those ineligible for a Social Security Number—as well as any dependents and spouses listed on their taxes, regardless of their legal status.

The [second coronavirus relief package President Trump signed on December 27](#) was intended to rectify some of these exclusions, [granting stimulus payments to the 1.4 million citizen spouses of undocumented immigrants](#) unfairly shut out of the CARES Act. Under the new relief bill, citizen spouses married to undocumented immigrants are eligible for up to \$600 in relief payments and \$600 for each citizen dependent. And when they file their 2020 taxes, they will also be eligible for [retroactive payments](#) from the first COVID relief bill—up to \$1200 for themselves and \$600 for each citizen dependent.

But the new bill continues to exclude the [estimated 4.3 million adults](#) who file their taxes with an ITIN, as well as their dependents.

It is unjust for lawmakers to ignore the plight of citizen children growing up in mixed-status families, just as it is unjust for them to exclude their taxpaying parents. Undocumented immigrants pay [billions in state and local taxes](#) each year, and [more than half pay federal income taxes](#). Undocumented immigrants are [overrepresented in the workforce](#) and at the frontlines of the pandemic. Out of an estimated 7 million undocumented immigrants in the workforce, [5 million serve as essential workers](#)—in farmwork, food services, construction, and maintenance.

In the US, public policy has traditionally treated the citizen children of undocumented parents just like other citizens. But the Trump Administration has created a dangerous precedent of discriminating against families of mixed immigration statuses. In April 2019, the Administration [proposed evicting families from public housing solely because they had an undocumented family](#)

member. And the White House deliberately introduced language into the first CARES Act to exclude households with one undocumented member from receiving stimulus payments.

Undocumented immigrants are already excluded from unemployment insurance. A Trump Administration policy implemented in February 2020 penalizing immigrants who use public benefits has also made many leery of applying for food stamps or income support for their citizen children. And now the failure of the second coronavirus relief bill to redress the initial exclusion of undocumented immigrants only further ensures that their children grow up as second-class citizens.

As anthropologists, we know that citizen children in immigrant families often assume greater responsibility to help compensate for their parents' social disadvantage. Citizen children serve as "border brokers," helping parents navigate the institutions of a society from which they have been excluded. Because of their linguistic capital, they are called on to translate for parents in unfamiliar settings. Because of their legal privilege and access to work authorization, they often take on work for which their parents are ineligible to bolster the economic well-being of the family. Similarly, economic lockdowns during the pandemic have created unequal burdens for citizen children in mixed-status families.

Karla, for example, is a 13-year-old daughter of undocumented parents living near Vail, Colorado. When the pandemic led the restaurants where her parents worked to close, they lost seven months of income between them. In order to pay their monthly rent, her parents were forced to deplete Karla and her sister's college fund.

Similarly, Bruno is an 18-year-old high school senior living with his undocumented parents and grandparents. In the spring, his mother and grandmother lost their work cleaning homes and his father lost his construction job. Bruno was the only family member with valid papers, and the only member who could obtain work at the big retail stores that remained open during the lockdown. So Bruno began working 36 hours a week at Walmart. He now has to repeat his senior year.

Depriving undocumented immigrants of economic relief saddles their children with unequal life chances. Some states and local governments have sought to bridge the federal COVID relief gap for immigrants, and community-based organizations have also created solidarity funds to assist vulnerable mixed-status families. However, these resources are limited and quite depleted 10 months into the pandemic. Because of their double exclusion from federal pandemic relief, immigrant families now face a severe economic handicap. Any third stimulus must help remedy this situation by providing immigrant families with economic justice and by amending for their prior exclusion.

If the second coronavirus relief bill provided retroactive payments to the citizen and legal resident spouses of undocumented immigrants unfairly excluded in the CARES Act, a third bill must also make amends. Not only must a third bill provide stimulus payments to all taxpayers, regardless of legal status, but it must also provide retroactive payments to the citizen children the previous two bills excluded.

In November, candidate Biden indicated his support for [the HEROES Act](#), a bill that would have provided stimulus payments to all taxpayers, not just those with Social Security Numbers. [The Biden immigration plan](#) also clearly acknowledges how critical it is to address the circumstances of immigrant families, not just the “DREAMers” who have garnered the most public attention and support. The newly-elected President must follow through on his commitments. He must not forget the undocumented immigrants who supported the country during the pandemic and their citizen children. These heroes and their children deserve to be included in the third stimulus bill, and they deserve economic justice.

*This statement was prepared in collaboration with the Steering Committee of the Anthropologist Action Network for Immigrants and Refugees.*