



Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 0873-2011, **Version:** \*

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Res. No. 873

Resolution urging the New York City Department of Education to assist the Caribbean international teachers it recruited to attain citizenship and the United States Congress to include a discussion of the needs of international teachers recruited to work in the United States in the comprehensive immigration reform debate.

By Council Members Williams, Brewer, Cabrera, Chin, Dromm, James, Koppell, Lander, Mendez, Eugene and Arroyo

Whereas, At the turn of the twenty-first century, New York City public schools were faced with a severe shortage of teachers; and

Whereas, To address this need, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) created the Caribbean Recruitment Initiative, a program of the Center for Recruitment and Professional Development of the DOE, which focused on recruiting Caribbean teachers; and

Whereas, To recruit the high caliber, educated teachers needed in New York City public schools, DOE promised prospective, teachers from the Caribbean competitive salaries, housing assistance, education subsidies, and a pathway to permanent residency in the United States; and

Whereas, Of the approximately 3,340 teachers DOE recruited from around the world to teach in New York City's public schools, approximately 500 teachers are from the Caribbean (the "Caribbean teachers"); and

Whereas, When the Caribbean teachers arrived in the United States, DOE sponsored the Caribbean teachers through J-1 visas; and

Whereas, According to the U.S. Department of State, a J-1 visa is a non-immigrant visa issued to an individual who meets certain eligibility criteria and is sponsored either by a private sector or government

program; a J-1 visa is valid for one year and renewable two times; and

Whereas, There is an additional program called the H1-B program, which, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, is for hiring non-immigrant individuals as workers in specialty occupations; a H1-B visa is valid for three years, and renewable once for a maximum of six years; and

Whereas, According to *Broken Promises, The Story of Caribbean International Teachers in New York City's Public Schools*, a report by the Black Institute, (the "Report"), at the end of the validity of the Caribbean teachers' J-1 visas, DOE advised them to apply for H1-B visas; and

Whereas, According to the Report, many Caribbean teachers are now approaching the end of validity of their H1-B visas, are experiencing difficulty in obtaining permanent residency, and are fearful of being deported and unemployed; and

Whereas, The DOE is at least partially responsible for these hardships; and

Whereas, The Report states that the setbacks Caribbean teachers are experiencing in their quest for permanent residency include, but are not limited to: (i) DOE's classification of them as EB-3 workers, which is a designation for unskilled workers, (ii) DOE's shifting criteria for obtaining its support for permanent residency; and (iii) DOE's grant of authority to principals to decline to recommend a Caribbean teacher, a decision that that will automatically affect such teacher's immigration status in the United States; and

Whereas, As noted in the Report, decisions affecting an individual teacher's ability to remain in the United States may be beyond the scope of a principal's employment; and

Whereas, The DOE should take all possible actions to quickly resolve all pending immigration issues Caribbean teachers and their families are facing; and

Whereas, The Caribbean teachers uprooted their families from their native countries with the hope of

sponsoring their loved ones to become citizens and permanent residents of the United States, a status that would provide them the many privileges United States citizens and residents are offered; and

Whereas, Many of the Caribbean teachers were recruited ten years ago and brought their children with them; because the permanent residency process has taken much longer than anticipated and only children under the age of twenty-one can be sponsored by their legal permanent resident parents for immigration benefits, many of their children have aged out of status and are deportable; and

Whereas, On May 10, 2011, President Barack Obama gave a speech dedicated solely to immigration, in which he reiterated his commitment to comprehensive immigration reform; and

Whereas, A discussion of the needs of international teachers recruited to work in the United States must be included in the comprehensive immigration reform debate; and

Whereas, The U.S. Congress should assist in expediting the permanent residency process for Caribbean teachers who have been enriching the lives of the City's youth for the past decade; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges the New York City Department of Education to assist the Caribbean international teachers it recruited to attain citizenship and the United States Congress to include a discussion of the needs of international teachers recruited to work in the United States in the comprehensive immigration reform debate.

JSM  
LS# 2498  
6/8/11