

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN
ACTION ALERT COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

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9 July, 1991

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
U.S. Senate
135 Senate Russell Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20514

Dear Senator Hatch:

We, the undersigned members of the Black Leadership Forum, write to urge you to postpone introduction of your employer sanctions repeal legislation until we have had an opportunity to report to you what we believe to be the devastating impact the repeal would have on the economic condition of un- and semi-skilled workers--a disproportionate number of whom are African American and Hispanic; and until we have had the opportunity to propose to you and to our Hispanic brothers and sisters, what we believe could be a number of effective means of eliminating the discrimination occasioned by employer sanctions, without losing the protection sanctions provide for U.S. workers, especially minority workers.

The Black Leadership Forum is a coalition of the chief executive officers of the nation's oldest and largest African American organizations and coalitions.* We represent hundreds of thousands of African American registered voters, nationwide. Each of our organizations seeks the full and unfettered participation of African Americans, other disadvantaged minorities and the poor, in all sectors of our society. We have led and continue to lead the national effort to open and include into the American mainstream, "locked-out" persons of all races, ethnicities and socio-economic strata. We find intolerable discrimination based on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, physical or mental capacity and socio-economic condition.

While we have divergent views on the complex issue of employer sanctions, the undersigned Black Leadership Forum members and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement** are united in three respects:

* The chief executive officers of the following organizations are members of the Black Leadership Forum: NAACP Legal Defense Fund, National Urban League, National Urban Coalition, National Council of Negro Women, A. Philip Randolph Institute, NAACP, OICs of America, SCLC, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, National Newspaper Publishers Association, National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials, National Pan-Hellenic Council, National Conference of Black Mayors, Congressional Black Caucus .

1. We are fully committed to the elimination of the root causes of national origin discrimination under the Immigration Reform & Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), as well as discriminatory impact.
2. We believe that there are a number of effective ways to remedy discrimination resulting from IRCA, without tampering with employer sanctions. Some measures we support are contained in the Report and Recommendations of the Taskforce on IRCA-Related Discrimination and in the 1990 GAO Report on Immigration Reform. Employer Sanctions and the Question of Discrimination.
3. Finally, we desire to discuss with you and other members of Congress, the importance of employer sanctions to the economic security of African American and Hispanic workers.

We are concerned, Senator Hatch, that your proposed remedy to the employer sanctions-based discrimination, namely, the elimination of employer sanctions, will cause another problem--the revival of the pre-1986 discrimination against black and brown U.S. and documented workers, in favor of cheap labor-- the undocumented workers. This would undoubtedly exacerbate an already severe economic crisis in communities where there are large numbers of new immigrants.

Finally, we are concerned that some who support the repeal of employer sanctions are using "discrimination" as a guise for their desire to abuse undocumented workers and to introduce cheap labor into the U.S. workforce. America does not have a labor shortage. With roughly 7 million people unemployed, and double that number discouraged from seeking work, the removal of employer sanctions threatens to add additional U.S. workers to the rolls of the unemployed. Additionally, it would add to competition for scarce jobs and drive down wages. Moreover, the repeal of employer sanctions will inevitably add to our social problems and place an unfair burden on the poor in the cities in which most new immigrants cluster--cities which are already suffering housing shortages and insufficient human needs services.

Senator Hatch, we believe that what this country needs is not to prematurely scrap employer sanctions, but rather, we need education and training programs designed to prepare the unemployed, especially African Americans, Hispanics, and others at greatest risk, to meet the market demands of tomorrow.

** Black Leadership Forum members have met with Hispanic labor leadership on this issue. Jack Oterro, President of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), which represents more than 1.4 million Latinos in the labor movement, joins the BLF members in this appeal.

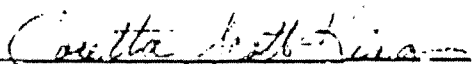
While not a panacea for the nation's illegal immigration problems, employer sanctions are one necessary means of stopping the exploitation of vulnerable workers and the undercutting of American jobs and living standards.

Prior to repealing employer sanctions, please permit us to document our case, and to present to you, viable alternatives to repeal.

One of us will contact you in the very near future to ascertain your willingness to delay introduction of your repeal legislation, until you have had an opportunity to hear from us.

We thank you for your consideration.

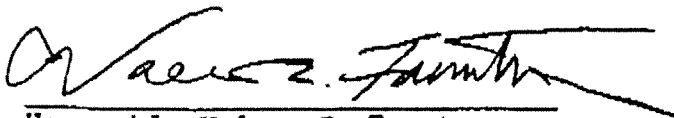
Sincerely,



Mrs. Coretta Scott King
Vice President, Black Leadership Forum
President & CEO
Martin Luther King, Jr. Center
for Non-Violent Social Change



Mr. Jack Otero
President
Labor Council for Latin American
Advancement



Honorable Walter E. Fauntroy
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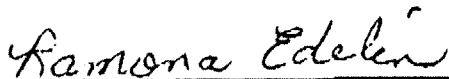
Honorable Parren J. Mitchell
President
Minority Business Legal Defense &
Education Fund, Inc.



Mr. William Lucy
President
Coalition of Black Trade Unionists



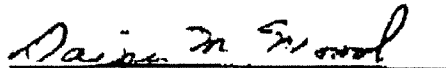
Mr. Norman Hill
President
A. Philip Randolph Institute



Dr. Ramona Edelin
President
National Urban Coalition



Honorable Richard G. Hatcher
President
R. Gordon Hatcher Associates



Ms. Daisy M. Wood
President
National Pan-Hellenic Council