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House of Representatives

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Opening Statement Congressman Matt Cartwright, Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Health Care, Benefits, and Administrative Rules Committee on Oversight & Government Reform

Joint Hearing on "The Fiscal Costs of the President's Executive Action on Immigration"

March 17, 2015

Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening this morning's hearing on the potential costs of the Administration's executive actions on immigration.

There are indeed costs to immigration, costs that cannot be boiled down to a pithy soundbite. And while there is much disagreement what to do about the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States I think we can all agree that the cost of doing nothing is too much to bear. That is why I have supported and will continue to support comprehensive immigration reform that includes a tough but responsible path to citizenship. I believe illegal conduct must be punished with fees and fines, and the dangerous undocumented persons deported. Such a plan would bring undocumented immigrants out of the shadows and transform them into tax paying individuals who pay their fair share into our health care system and Social Security.

Last Congress, the Senate passed a bipartisan bill that would have helped fix our broken immigration system while also spurring economic growth in northeastern Pennsylvania and across the country. In fact, according to a White House report, the bipartisan Senate immigration bill would have spurred Pennsylvania's economy and created approximately 15,780 new jobs and generated \$64 million for Pennsylvania. This bill was supported by the Chamber of Commerce and the American Farm Bureau.

Following the House Republican Leadership's failure to act on the bipartisan Senate immigration bill, the Administration took executive action late last year. The anticipated economic benefits are significant.

For instance, the White House Council on Economic Advisors has conservatively estimated that the executive actions on immigration would:

- Raise the level of GDP by 0.5% after ten years, which is equivalent to an additional \$100 billion in real GDP in 2024 (in today's dollars);
- Cut Federal deficits by \$30 billion in ten years;
- Expand the country's labor force by 200,000 and raise average wages for U.S.-born workers.

Without immigration reform, our current immigration laws impose huge fiscal and economic costs. A recent report from the American Action Forum, a conservative-leaning policy institute headed by Douglas Holtz-Eakin, concluded the 20 year cost of apprehending and removing all undocumented immigrants while securing the borders would cost taxpayers between \$815 billion and \$1.2 trillion. They also found, and I quote:

The labor force would shrink by 6.4 percent or 11 million workers and, as a result, in 20 years the U.S. GDP would be 5.7 percent or \$1.6 trillion lower than it would be without fully enforcing current law.

This conservative-leaning group's analysis is a useful reminder that all immigration reform policies have costs. It's up to us in Congress to appropriately weigh those costs and other factors when crafting laws.

And I think why you've seen so many Republicans and Democrats – not to mention scores of labor, business, and advocacy groups – come down on the side of supporting a comprehensive approach to immigration reform. It strikes the right balance. It secures our borders, strengthens our economy, and brings millions of undocumented immigrants out of the shadows and into tax paying individuals who pay their fair share into our health care and Social Security systems. A comprehensive solution advances our country's values and honors our history as a nation of immigrants.

Again, I thank the Chair and look forward to the witnesses' testimony.

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