

What is Chance to Come Home?

[Chance to Come Home](#) is a national campaign calling on the Biden administration to allow unjustly deported people an opportunity to return to the U.S. and reunite with their families and loved ones. The campaign is led by the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) in partnership with ten courageous deported advocates living in exile and dozens of organizations around the world.

What is the policy proposal at the heart of the Chance to Come Home campaign?

The Chance to Come Home campaign urges the Biden administration to create a new, central unit within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), that would meaningfully review requests by deported individuals to come home to the United States. Specifically, this unit would conduct an independent, centralized, and fair review of all applications using *existing* legal mechanisms and procedures. In other words, DHS does not need Congress to pass a law to create this central unit; it can do so today using laws and regulations intended to help deported people make a case to return. This proposal is embodied in this [2021 NIJC White Paper](#).

Who would this central unit help?

The system would help unjustly or unlawfully deported individuals, such as veterans, parents, and business owners with decades of life in the United States. The establishment of a new unit would provide a structured process giving unjustly deported individuals a fair chance of returning home.

What barriers do deported people face in making a case to return to the U.S.?

The current mechanisms for deported people to seek a chance to return home to the U.S. is unduly burdensome and practically impossible to navigate, especially for those without representation. These individuals may appeal their removal through a federal court or request a case reopening, but both options face strict deadlines and high costs, and the success is rare even when people have strong claims to return due to limited legal support and challenges filing these requests in a timely manner from abroad.

Deported people can try to overcome these barriers to return by requesting “humanitarian parole” or asking DHS to agree to reopen their underlying immigration case, but these are discretionary decisions that are largely ignored by DHS line-level officers or summarily denied. Coupled with the inefficiency and lack of transparency of the current process, many immigrants are left with little to no chance of return even when they have strong claims to relief and status in the United States.

Without a dedicated unit for reviewing and reversing unjust deportations, persons whom prior administrations deported in violation of the law cannot remedy their removals to return to the United States to reunite with loved ones. For example, [Samuel Anthony](#), who was deported to Sierra Leone after over forty years of residence in the U.S., has faced multiple barriers in his attempts to return. Despite a pending U-Visa application and his request for humanitarian parole to reunite with his family and seek much needed mental health support that is not available in Sierra Leone, his efforts have been stymied by bureaucratic delays. DHS failed to timely review one of Samuel’s humanitarian parole requests to return to the U.S. to visit his sick mother. By the time the agency reviewed the application, his mother had already passed away.

Is the establishment of a central unit to review requests for return from deported people within the President’s authority?

Yes. DHS already manages a centralized removal review process through the [ImmVets](#) initiative, which facilitates the return of deported U.S. veterans. A similar central unit could be established to give unjustly deported individuals a chance to come home and reunite with their loved ones using existing legal mechanisms.

How exactly would a central unit in DHS overcome the existing barriers unjust deported people face in trying to reunite with their loved ones?

The central unit would streamline the process by allowing deported individuals to submit their requests directly to one portal or office rather than to an immigration court, individual ICE attorney, or the backlogged office responsible for reviewing requests for humanitarian parole. With such a central unit, people would not have to wait for line-level ICE lawyers—who are oriented toward a bottom line of deportation and not returns—to consider requests for the prosecutorial discretion necessary from ICE for a deported person to make a case to return home.

What factors would the central unit consider in its review of applications?

The central unit would consider several factors in its review of applications that prioritize family unity and take into account research on the harms deportation imposes on family members and loved ones. These factors include:

- The impact of deportation on family unity
- The presence of U.S. citizen children or spouses
- The hardships and potential dangers faced by the deported individual in their current country of residence
- Whether the deportation was a result of exercising constitutionally protected rights or based on outdated or incorrect legal interpretations

Is there any existing congressional support for this policy-ask at the heart of the Chance to Come Home campaign?

Yes. In summer 2023 [over 60 members of Congress](#) signed a letter calling on the Biden administration to support a central unit dedicated to considering requests for return from deported people seeking to reunite with loved ones. Additionally, language in the Joint Explanatory Statements of the DHS funding bills for Fiscal Years 22, 23 and 24 support the facilitation of return of deported people.

How can I support the ‘Chance to Come Home’ campaign?

If you are a member of Congress, you can support the Chance to Come Home campaign by cosponsoring the [Chance to Come Home resolution](#), which will be introduced by U.S. Representatives Cleaver, Espaillat, and Trone in July 2024. The resolution seeks to address the injustices and harms of deportation by urging Congress and administrative agencies to provide deported individuals a meaningful opportunity to return to the U.S.

You can also show your support by signing this petition:
<https://immigrantjustice.org/chancetocomehome#petition>



Tina Hamdi, a former Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient was brought to the United States by her parents when she was three years old. While growing up in Ohio, Tina met her former husband when she was 16; her husband subjected her to a cycle of abuse and was eventually incarcerated. While he was in jail, he coerced Tina into bringing him prescription drugs which resulted in Tina being arrested, incarcerated for nine months, and deported for her only offense, despite having DACA status at the time. Tina was torn away from her two young, U.S. citizen children and forced to return to Morocco, a country that she does not know. Today, Tina works as an English teacher in Morocco and continues to fight every day to return home to her children.

**Listen to Tina’s
NPR interview:**

