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March 13, 2018

Honorable Mayor and Members of the Long Beach City Council
333 W. Ocean Boulevard
Long Beach, CA 90802

I urge the City Council to pass a “clean” Long Beach Values Act with no “carve-outs” for past convictions and a fully-funded Deportation Defense Fund. As proposed, the protections granted under the current proposal, would not be given to individuals with certain past convictions. The impact of these “carve-outs” is inconsistent with the values of diversity, progress, and inclusion as it disproportionately excludes the majority of the Cambodian refugee community, currently highly vulnerable to deportation.

In November of 2017, I sent a letter to the President and the Department of Homeland Security expressing my deep concern about multiple reports of ICE targeting Cambodians Americans in the city of Long Beach and across the country for detention and possible deportation. Reports show that California is the most impacted, with a significant number belonging to my district. The raids are causing extreme worry and stress for many families in and around our communities.

In recent months, constituents have contacted my office to express terror and trauma that they are experiencing from escalated deportation tactics of the current Administration. Most, if not all, of those detained were lawful permanent residents who came to the United States as refugees following the end of the Khmer Rouge genocide. Many were born in refugee camps and have never set foot in the country that ICE is trying to remove them to. Upon arrival into the U.S., many were resettled into neighborhoods struggling with high rates of poverty, crime, and failing schools. Still coping with significant trauma from the war, these refugee kids made mistakes as teenagers and young adults and were funneled into the criminal justice system. All of them served their time, and the majority transformed their lives to become productive community members, business owners, and loving parents supporting their U.S citizen families. Seeking the deportation of individuals who have already completed their sentences and have complied with the law completely since then is an unconscionable form of double jeopardy.

It is troubling to see one of the biggest roundups of Southeast Asian refugees in recent memory happening. Our constituents and families across the city and the country should not be used as political pawns.

I call on the Long Beach City Council to pass a clean Long Beach Values Act to protect these vulnerable communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alan Lowenthal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress