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U-VISA REGULATIONS RELEASED

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, under pressure from Congressman David Pryce (D-NC) and Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA), released interim regulations on the U-visa recently, ensuring that thousands of immigrant crime victims can finally receive protections of a law passed by Congress back in 2000.

Created as part of the *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act*, the U-visa is a protection for immigrant crime victims who are helping law enforcement investigate or prosecute crimes. To qualify, an undocumented immigrant must prove that he or she has suffered from physical or mental abuse as a result of the crime.

Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act was unenforceable until now because it needed regulations in order to implement U-visas – a path to establishing lawful and permanent residence, commonly known as getting a Green Card.

“These regulations make it possible for our most vulnerable immigrants to finally have the opportunity to apply for a status that should have been available years ago,” said Leslye Orloff, Director of the Immigrant Women Program at Legal Momentum. “Without regulations, thousands of immigrants were at best allowed to apply for U-Visa Interim Relief, which granted them authorization to work legally but still kept them undocumented.”

Legal Momentum’s Immigrant Women Program estimates that 8,000 immigrants and their children have applied for and received interim relief, but many more

waited for the regulations. In addition to keeping thousands of crime victims from

reporting the crimes, the seven-year delay imposed huge burdens on eligible immigrants who would have, by now, received their Green Cards. These immigrants were also prevented from leaving the United States to see family members, from receiving critical benefits, and were required to pay fees to renew work authorization.

More information and resources, including eligibility requirements, is available at www.legalmomentum.org/iwp.
