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Chairwoman Lofgren, Members of the Committee, and Special Guests: Good afternoon. Let me start off by thanking you for this opportunity. I am a US Air Force Academy graduate, with a degree in aeronautical engineering and a minor in mathematics. Currently I am working on my master's degree in Industrial Engineering from Texas A&M. I attended pilot training in Pensacola and Vance AFB, with my first assignment being at MacDill AFB. I have been deployed three times since my commissioning, all in support of Operation Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. My next deployment is in September of this year for four months. The statements and opinions I express today are my own and do not represent the views of the Air Force, the Department of Defense or any other government agency.

Now let me take you to my humble beginnings and tell you about the positive impact a bill like this would have on me and my family. I come from a family of migrant workers. I grew up in a small town. My husband and I were neighbors. Prom, high school graduation, acceptance to the Academy, he was there. He moved out to Colorado in 1999 to be close to me and a part of what I wanted to become—a pilot. Academics, football games, parades, jump school and then in 2002, graduation, he was there. We were married two days after graduating the Academy, by the justice of the peace. Three weeks later, we found an immigration attorney to help us start drafting papers to adjust my husband's status.

After my leave was over, it was back to work. Water survival, resistance training, pilot training, three military moves, he was there. In August of 2004, our son was born. By then we were settled in Florida and I had done what I had set out to do. Fly. The TDYs, the two trips around the world in one month, safety school and two deployments, he was there. As the loving, supportive military spouse. All the while, we were both waiting to hear from immigration.

I received word from our attorney, while I was deployed, that on November 13, 2006, we would go to Juarez, Mexico for my husband's consulate interview. We arrived three days prior, to be sure we had enough time to get all our paperwork in order. His interview, consisted of a five hour wait in line, followed by a two minute question and answer period about how he had entered the country. Our lawyers warned us that his prior entry and false claim to citizenship, could bar my husband from the country. But we were confident that after four years of waiting, and thousands of dollars, we would be able to move on.

But what you hear on television from so-called experts, is not true—it is not easy to stand in line and get legal. Our application was denied and my husband was told that he was barred forever from entering the United States. I flew home the next day a single parent. I flew my husband to his mother's house in Mexico. But I did not cry--because I had not accepted defeat, I made it a priority to find a way to get us together again. I would find a way. It could not be possible, that my husband, who has never been convicted of any crimes, could be barred permanently. In the mean time, I could take an assignment overseas for a few years while we worked out a waiver.

Then in March 2007, five months later, my son was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. I was crushed. The EEG, CatScan, two surgeries, therapies, the doctor's appointments, my husband was not there. My better half, my shoulder to cry on.... is not here. I refocused my attention and energy on my son. His medical condition, takes overseas assignments out of reach for us. From worrying about child care to worrying about my next mission, now that my husband is not here, I carry the load alone.

I have accepted defeat. I could not get us together again. I could not find a waiver, because there is no waiver. I do not work for a one-mistake Air Force, or even a two-mistake Air Force. I maintained throughout all of this, that honesty was the best policy and that it would all work out in our favor. I don't condone my husband's actions, although in the scheme of things, what he did was not horrible. He too comes from humble beginnings. My husband is not a criminal. He is worse off than a criminal—even criminals can pay their debt and are afforded the opportunity to be reintegrated into society. Yet under US immigration law today, there is no forgiveness process.

And I do not know how to love someone and never have an opportunity to make a life together. Am I supposed to file divorce papers? Should I break up my family to comply with the law? To love is let go. I need closure, and to move on. It's only fair to give him permission to try and rebuild his life in a country he never grew up in. I can't imagine what it must feel like for your wife to choose country before you and then again to choose your son before you.

I suppose I could apply for a hardship separation from the military and go live in Mexico, as others have done. But, I am an American soldier, my life, my family, my job, is here in the US. I'm proud to do my part. I want my family intact. I know by testifying today I can make you aware of the horrible decision I am being forced to make—choosing between husband and country. I hope you do your part by passing a bill that will spare other fellow soldiers in similar situation, my pain. So as long as I can, I am honored to continue to serve you in uniform. Thank you.