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Federal Court Blocks Unlawful Policy Change, Restores Protections for Tens of Thousands of Abused, Neglected, or Abandoned Immigrant Youth

In an early win for plaintiffs, Judge halts rescission of Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Deferred Action Policy, citing procedural violations and safeguarding young people from deportation.

NEW YORK, November 21, 2025 – Late Wednesday, a federal judge in the Eastern District of New York granted key relief to plaintiffs challenging the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) decision to end the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) Deferred Action Policy.

The plaintiffs – nine immigrant youth, Central American Refugee Center (CARECEN-NY), and Centro Legal de la Raza – are represented by the National Immigration Project, Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), Public Counsel, Davis Wright Tremaine LLP, and Lowenstein Sandler LLP.

Introduced in 2022, the SIJS deferred action policy provided protection from deportation and work authorization to immigrant youth who survived abuse, abandonment, neglect, or other parental mistreatment. USCIS abruptly rescinded the program in June 2025, prompting the lawsuit. This ruling restores access to these protections for vulnerable youth, who have faced heightened risk of detention and deportation since the policy was rescinded. Ending deferred action also stripped these young people of the ability to apply for work permits—cutting off access to essentials like Social Security cards, driver's licenses, health coverage, education, banking, and safe employment opportunities.

Key provisions of the ruling include:

- **Rescission stayed:** USCIS must operate under its 2022 policy until issuance of a valid agency policy change or further court order. This means SIJS youth will again be considered for deferred action and can apply to renew existing deferred action. In addition, USCIS must process work permit applications for those with SIJS deferred action.
- **Protection from removal:** The court barred the government from deporting the nine individual plaintiffs while litigation continues.

"It brings me great joy and relief to know that we, SIJS youth, will have another chance to grow and be safe in this country," said **BRC, a SIJS youth and named plaintiff**.

"The court's decision is a rebuke of the government's unlawful actions and failure to consider the harms of those actions on tens of thousands of immigrant youth across the country," said

Rachel Leya Davidson, Counsel for the Plaintiffs and Director of End SIJS Backlog Coalition at the National Immigration Project.

“This ruling affirms what should have been clear from the start: the government can’t turn its back on vulnerable young people it has promised to protect,” said [Natalie Kraner](#), counsel for the Plaintiffs, Lowenstein Sandler LLP.

“This ruling restores a measure of safety and stability that the government abruptly and unlawfully stripped away from SIJS youth. The fight continues, but we are grateful that today our plaintiffs and immigrant youth across the country can breathe easier knowing their protections have been restored for the time being,” said [John Magliery](#), counsel for the Plaintiffs, Davis Wright Tremaine LLP.

About the National Immigration Project

The [National Immigration Project](#) is a membership organization of attorneys, advocates, and community members who believe that all people should be treated with dignity, live freely, and flourish. We litigate, advocate, educate, and build bridges across movements to ensure that those most impacted by the immigration and criminal systems are uplifted and supported. Learn more at [nipnlq.org](#). National Immigration Project is the organization home of the [End SIJS Backlog Coalition](#), national group of impacted immigrant youth and allied advocates working together to end the SIJS backlog and its harms.

About Kids in Need of Defense

Through strategic partnerships, [KIND](#) provides pro bono legal representation and psychosocial services for forcibly displaced children across the United States, and we work to replicate this same model abroad. We partner with governments, international organizations, NGOs, and the private sector to protect unaccompanied and separated children through training, technical assistance, and capacity strengthening. Since its inception, KIND has received referrals for tens of thousands of children, serving them through direct legal assistance and by leveraging the pro bono legal resources provided by hundreds of law firm, corporate, law school, and bar association partners.

About Public Counsel

Public Counsel is a nonprofit public interest law firm dedicated to advancing civil rights and racial and economic justice, as well as to amplifying the power of our clients through comprehensive legal advocacy. Founded on and strengthened by a pro bono legal service model, its staff and volunteers seek justice through direct legal services, promote healthy and resilient communities through education and outreach, and support community-led efforts to transform unjust systems through litigation and policy advocacy in and beyond Los Angeles.

About the Lowenstein Center for the Public Interest at Lowenstein Sandler LLP

From its founding, Lowenstein Sandler has been committed to advancing the public interest and serving communities in need. The [Lowenstein Center for the Public Interest](#) embodies this commitment, directing the firm’s strong pro bono program and other forms of civic and

philanthropic engagement. Through these efforts, the center addresses significant social problems and offers meaningful assistance to low-income and other marginalized people, along with the organizations that advocate for and support them. This work engages the full range of the firm's talents and reflects the core values that imbue all of the firm's efforts: to perform work of the highest quality in a manner that maximizes results for our clients and causes.

About Davis Wright Tremaine

Davis Wright Tremaine LLP is an AmLaw 100 law firm with more than 600 lawyers representing clients based throughout the United States and around the world. The firm is widely recognized as a national pro bono leader and has a long record of effective advocacy on behalf of immigrant communities. Learn more at <https://www.dwt.com/about/pro-bono>.