



About the Youth Researchers

SIJS backlog youth researcher-advocates developed research questions and interviewed other young people, collecting and documenting the stories of impacted youth for this report. They attended meetings and shared their own stories with members of Congress and led a youth organizing training to support other impacted youth in doing the same.

Maria Huerta Rodriguez is 23 years old. She came to the United States from Mexico when she was around 7 years old. She spent about two and a half years in the SIJS backlog, receiving her green card in February of 2021. Maria’s dream is to become a lawyer to help the community and shape the law. When reflecting on her work with the End SIJS Backlog Coalition, Maria shared that she *“was very eager to participate in this project to help other youths impacted by the backlog like myself and be their voice. Interviewing youths affected by the backlog and listening to their story stirred up many feelings for myself. I learned from each of their stories and admire their strength, it motivated me more to continue to fight to make a change to end the backlog.”*

Ivonne Silva is 21 years old. She came to the United States from El Salvador when she was 13 years old. She spent around 4 years in the SIJS backlog, finally receiving her green card in October of 2021. In discussing her time in the backlog, Ivonne shared *“when I was in the backlog I had hope to get the chance to rebuild my life for better and to not struggle anymore with financial aid for school and not being able to work without a working permit.”* Ivonne is currently working part time and going to school for cosmetology. She dreams of opening her own beauty salon. When reflecting on her work with the End SIJS Backlog Coalition, Ivonne shared that *“it was a great experience hearing from people with different backgrounds and similar situations that I was in. We connected better because I understood their situation as immigrants. Having meetings with the members of Congress made me feel as if we were part of something big, making our voices heard and looking for changes in the law to stop the backlog from making thousands of immigrants lives more difficult.”*