



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

June 13, 2013

U.S. Senate

Washington, DC

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,000 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations, I am writing to express our support for S. 744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act. CHA is founded upon a tradition of helping the poorest and most vulnerable among us, and is called to advocate on behalf of such vulnerable populations as our nation's immigrants.

We were pleased to see such strong bipartisan support for S. 744 this week, and we hope to see that continue. As the Senate moves to debate the many amendments expected to be offered to this legislation, we urge you to keep the core elements of the bill intact even as improvements are considered. Above all, S. 744 in its final form must provide an achievable and accessible path to citizenship that includes the maximum number of people and improves family reunification measures. CHA and its partner organizations in the Catholic community remain particularly concerned about potential amendments to set unreasonable border security controls for the bill, as well as amendments to make the path to citizenship more difficult by increasing the amount of fines or imposing difficult income requirements including the payment of back taxes. If and when these amendments are offered, we strongly urge you to oppose them.

As health care providers, CHA also is committed to the principle that all persons including immigrants need and deserve access to affordable, quality health care. During the committee mark-up process CHA supported amendments proposed by Sen. Mazei Hirono to expand access



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to coverage under the legislation. The first would ensure access to coverage under the Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Programs for all low-income, lawfully present children and pregnant women—including those deemed as “registered provisional immigrants” (RPI) under the legislation—who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for these programs. The amendment also allows lawfully present individuals to be eligible for the Medicare program and for the nutritional assistance program (SNAP). The long-term effects of inadequate health care services and nutrition can prevent children, many of who will become U.S. citizens, from reaching their full potential. Without this amendment, low-income children would be denied access to Medicaid and CHIP coverage for 15 years.

The second amendment would clarify that those with RPI status will satisfy the current five-year waiting period for federal benefits, including Medicaid, during their 10-year provisional status, rather than having to wait an additional five years after being granted permanent lawful status. While CHA has always advocated the elimination of this waiting period altogether, we strongly support any measures that would shorten the length of time for immigrants to have access to vital health programs. Unfortunately these amendments were withdrawn during the mark-up, but we anticipate that they will be offered on the floor this month and strongly urge you to support them.

Thank you for your attention to the vital issue of comprehensive immigration reform, and if anyone at CHA can be of further assistance to you on this matter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sr. Carol Keehan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO