



Committee on Migration

c/o Migration and Refugee Services, USCCB

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December 22, 2016

Dear Senator,

I write you on behalf of the Committee on Migration of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB/COM) in support of S. 3542, the “Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy (BRIDGE) Act”, bipartisan legislation that was introduced late in the 114th Congress by Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Richard Durbin (D-IL). We ask that you consider cosponsoring this important measure when it is reintroduced during the 115th Congress.

As you may know, the BRIDGE Act would provide temporary relief from deportation and ensure employment authorization to individuals who are eligible for the Department of Homeland Security’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. It would accomplish this by providing DACA-eligible individuals with “provisional protected presence” and employment authorization. Applicants would be required to pay a reasonable fee, be subject to criminal background checks, and meet a number of eligibility criteria indicating that they: (1) came to the United States as minors, (2) grew up in this country, (3) have pursued an education or have served in the military, (4) have not committed any serious crimes, and (5) do not pose a threat to our country. Temporary protection under the BRIDGE Act would ensure that these young people can continue to work and study and be protected from deportation while Congress debates broader legislation to fix our broken immigration system

There are more than 740,000 young people who have received and benefitted from DACA. They are contributors to our economy, academic standouts in our universities, and leaders in our parishes. As Catholics, we support DACA as we believe in protecting the dignity of every human being, especially that of our children. These young people entered the U.S. as children and know America as their only home.

While we endorse the BRIDGE Act and support DACA youth, we note that DACA and the provisional protected presence status in the measure are temporary substitutes for larger legislative reform of our immigration laws that our country so desperately needs. We vow to

work with Congress and the new Administration to reform our immigration system in a humane and common-sense manner. However, in the meantime, enactment of the BRIDGE Act would help ensure that these young individuals who were brought to the United States as children and are contributing so much to our nation can continue to live their lives free of the anxiety that they could at any time be deported to a country they do not know and separated from their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe L. Vásquez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Most Reverent Joe Vásquez
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration