

March 9, 2006

**THE
CATHOLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION**
OF THE UNITED STATES

Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

Dear Senator:

As the Committee begins to markup immigration reform legislation, I encourage you on behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA) to reject narrow, enforcement-only proposals in favor of reforms that will comprehensively fix our broken immigration system.

The Catholic health ministry, comprising more than 2,000 Catholic health care sponsors, systems, hospitals, facilities, and related organizations, 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 believe that comprehensive immigration reform must include provisions that are family-based, as well as programs for temporary workers and earned legalization for those already in the country.

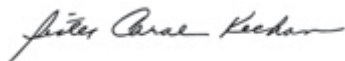
CHA is opposed to the House passed legislation (H.R. 4437) on immigration reform that we find to be overly harsh and punitive. Among its many harsh provisions that concern us are those that would criminalize undocumented presence in the United States, making it a felony punishable by more than a year in prison, and a provision that would extend criminal penalties to those assisting undocumented immigrants.

This latter provision could potentially place health-care workers, church workers, or other Good Samaritans at risk of criminal prosecution and imprisonment for acts of kindness, even in emergency situations, and must be clearly rejected in the Senate version of immigration reform legislation. Such a provision strikes at the very heart of our Christian calling to help anyone in need, regardless of their status in our society.

The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act (S.1033), introduced by Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), provides a comprehensive approach to solving the ills of the current system. It recognizes that law and border enforcement strategies will only be successful when our laws provide more responsive legal avenues for immigrant workers and those seeking to be with family. We believe anything short of this mix of strengthened enforcement and expanded legal channels for entry will not accomplish the goal of true immigration reform.

Through national leadership and moral courage, the Senate Judiciary Committee can chart a course for the future of our nation that maintains our ideals as a nation of immigrants, restores the rule of law, and protects our homeland. We urge you to support a comprehensive approach to immigration reform, S. 1033.

Sincerely,



Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and Chief Executive Officer
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