



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

April 12, 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 ask for your support in favor of comprehensive immigration reform legislation.

CHA has been very pleased to hear about the progress being made among members of the Senate to provide comprehensive reform. Specifically, we are pleased that the importance of providing a real path to citizenship for the 11 million currently undocumented immigrants in the U.S. has been recognized by the working group. A path to citizenship remains the highest priority for the Catholic health ministry and our partners within our Church community and among so many other faith-based groups. We agree, along with the bishops of the U.S. Catholic Church, that such a program would help stabilize the workforce, promote family unity and bring the undocumented population more fully into their communities.

As health care providers, we also urge the Senate to ensure that no provision in a comprehensive reform bill would jeopardize the health and safety of those whom it seeks to legalize. There should be no new or additional restrictions in the legislation, such as new waiting periods or exclusions from eligibility, to the existing eligibility rules for immigrants under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance program (CHIP). Additionally, we ask that a final comprehensive immigration reform package include the following:



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- Clarification that those in the process of obtaining, or those who already have obtained, lawful status under the bill's provisions are "lawfully present" for all purposes, and the extension of eligibility to them for tax subsidies under the ACA in federal Health Exchanges.
- Elimination of the five-year waiting period for otherwise eligible individuals for Medicaid and CHIP. While doing so would not make those in a provisional status eligible for these programs (as they would not be considered qualified under existing rules), it would ensure that once the newly legalized obtain green cards they would be eligible without an additional waiting period.
- If the waiting period cannot be eliminated altogether, the bill should at least consider individuals who obtain lawful permanent resident status after completion of the provisional status to have met the five-year waiting period for federal programs.

Thank you for your attention and focus on this important issue. CHA looks forward to working with you in the future to make comprehensive immigration reform a pathway to improving the health and lives of everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sr. Carol Keehan".

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO