

**Statement of Archbishop Jose Gomez  
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration  
April 22, 2013**

Thank you, Cardinal Dolan.

Let me commend the Senators for introducing this bill. It contains many of the elements the bishops are looking for in an immigration bill. The job now is to improve it so that all can come out of the shadows and are able to pursue the American Dream.

Let me highlight some areas we will try to improve during the legislative process.

First, let me comment on the path to citizenship. We support a path to citizenship, as it gives the undocumented an opportunity to become full members of our society and it keeps families together. Such a path should be achievable and include the maximum number of persons. We are concerned that eligibility requirements and other obstacles along the path could leave many behind in the shadows. If the goal is to solve the problem in a humane manner, then all undocumented persons should be able to participate.

We would look to reduce the length of time to receive a green card and eventual citizenship to no longer than ten years, which we believe is a reasonable period. We believe that the cut-off date of December 31, 2011, leaves too many persons behind and should be moved forward. Finally, we would like to see the costs of the program reduced, so that poor migrants and their families can attain citizenship.

As Cardinal Dolan mentioned, we believe family unity is an important cornerstone of our current immigration system. Immigrant families have helped build this nation and strengthen our social fabric. This legislation does some positive things for families, not least of which is legalizing the undocumented population, which keeps families together. We have concerns with the elimination of the sibling category and the reduction of visas for adult married children. We will look to ensure that these family members have the opportunity to join their loved ones in the new immigration system.

This is an important and historic moment for our country and for the church. We hope to see this legislation improve and advance, and we will work toward that end. The lives of millions of our fellow human beings and fellow Catholics depend upon it.