

Mission for Migrants
April 1, 2014
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Position on Immigration Reform
Legislation

The following are elements which should be contained in an immigration reform bill:

Path to Citizenship: A path to citizenship would permit undocumented immigrants to earn their citizenship over time by paying a fine, learning English, working, and getting to the back of the permanent residency (“green card”) line. A generous cut-off date should be included.

Future Flow Worker Program: A future flow worker program would provide visas for unskilled workers to enter the country and work on a temporary basis in important industries. Such a program would include appropriate wage and worker protections, allow for portability, keep families together, and provide an option for workers and their families to become permanent residents over time.

Reform of the Family Reunification System. The USCCB would like to see the family reunification system reformed so that families are reunited in an expeditious manner. It can take many years for families to be reunited under the current system. We recommend that spouses and minor children of legal permanent residents be moved to the immediate relatives of U.S. citizen category and that backlogs in family categories be eliminated.

Restoration of Due Process Protections. Due process protections for immigrants were eviscerated in the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996. The restoration of judicial discretion in immigration proceedings, and reform of mandatory detention laws are necessary.

Strengthening the Protection System for Refugees, Asylum-Seekers, and Unaccompanied Children. Any bill should strengthen, not weaken, protections for vulnerable populations. A repeal of the one-year filing deadline for asylum-seekers, expedited family reunification for refugees, and the appointment of counsel for unaccompanied alien minors are needed.

Address the Root Causes of Undocumented Migration. The long-term solution to undocumented migration is the promotion of sustainable economic development in sending countries. Job development programs should be established and promoted in these nations.

Effective Implementation Provisions. Any legislation should be implemented in the most efficient manner, including broad eligibility requirements, effective dates that allow for time for enrollment, and involvement of the community, and include NGOs. Funding other than fees should be authorized to account for infrastructure and personnel costs.

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