



Committee on Migration

c/o Migration and Refugee Services, USCCB

3211 Fourth Street NE • Washington DC 20017-1194

202-541-3227 • fax 202-722-8805 • email mrs@uscgb.org • www.usccb.org/mrs

January 13, 2015

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Migration, I write to ask that you oppose immigration-related amendments to H.R. 240, the Fiscal Year 2015 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act which are being offered by Representatives Aderholt, Blackburn, and DeSantis, respectively. I urge your opposition to these amendments, which attempt to defund and block implementation of the Administration's executive actions on immigration taken on November 20th to help keep immigrant families with U.S. Citizen and Legal Permanent Resident children together, as well as block continued implementation of the Administration's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initiative.

Representative Aderholt's immigration amendment would bar the use of funds for nearly all of the Administration's November 20th Executive Actions on Immigration and undermine numerous Department of Homeland Security (DHS) memos that outline deportation priorities and prosecutorial discretion. Representative Aderholt's amendment would place millions of hard-working immigrant families in peril and perpetuate situations of family separation. In addition, this amendment would upend existing DHS deportation and discretion priorities and force millions of undocumented people to return to living in the shadows to avoid new draconian deportation priorities. Representative Aderholt's amendment would cause immigrant families to suffer great harm and would frustrate the existing administration of immigration laws.

Representative Blackburn's immigration amendment would effectively repeal the Deferred Action Childhood Arrival (DACA) program by denying funds to new, previously denied, and renewal DACA applications. The amendment would therefore affect hundreds of thousands of hard-working ambitious immigrant children. As you know, DACA has benefited youth who have been able to work and pursue education, thus helping them to reach their potential and contribute to our nation. Forcing these children back into the shadows and exposing them to the threat of deportation would undermine their future contributions to our nation, and treat them as criminals in the only homeland they have ever known.

Representative DeSantis's immigration amendment would prevent DHS from implementing its memoranda setting civil immigration enforcement priorities. While presented as a measure that helps domestic violence victims, we fear that it actually would discourage many such victims from reporting abuse. Immigrants face obstacles to reporting crimes that have been perpetrated against them. This amendment would perpetuate this problem.

In our churches and in our parishes, we see firsthand the devastation of family separation and the family breakdown that results from such separation. For this reason, we strongly oppose these amendments and ask that you vote against them. Should any of them be agreed to, we would ask that you oppose the underlying bill. Instead, we urge you to pass just and humane immigration reform legislation that addresses all aspects of our broken immigration system. Such legislation is the best solution to our currently broken system. We welcome the opportunity to work with this Congress to fix our immigration system through comprehensive legislative means. We stand ready to work with the leaders of both parties to protect poor and vulnerable people, promote human life and dignity, and advance the common good.

Finally, we are deeply disappointed that the version of H.R. 240 being brought to the House floor excludes prolife language that the House has included in its draft Homeland Security appropriations bills in recent years. This provision simply maintains the longstanding ban on use of DHS funds for abortions, a necessary step because DHS funds are no longer covered by the abortion funding ban contained in the Commerce/Justice/Science appropriations bills. We strongly urge that this important provision be restored to the bill before it is taken up by the full House, or that an amendment restoring it be made in order on the House floor.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,

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Most Reverend Eusebio Elizondo
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration