



Conference of Major Superiors of Men

February 12, 2015

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader McConnell and all Representatives and Senators:

As Catholics, our faith tradition and sacred texts call us to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger. This is why our organization calls for a comprehensive approach to immigration reform based on the values of human dignity, compassion, and hospitality. We encourage legislators to pass laws that keep together and re-unite families, protect refugees and asylees, give due process protections to immigrants, stop or at least significantly decrease deportations, and address root causes of migration. CMSM is an association of the leadership of men in religious and apostolic institutes in the United States, believes that any proposals that are contrary to these values should be avoided.

Because Congress has failed to pass comprehensive immigration reform, we celebrate the Administration's recent actions to provide temporary relief from deportation to millions of our community members and are working across our network to assist in its implementation. Therefore, we urge all members of the House and Senate to reject legislation, including amendments to the DHS appropriations bill, that would stop, interfere or weaken the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for the Parents of Americans (DAPA) programs and other provisions made possible through recent executive orders on immigration.¹ We know of many students who have DACA, and even more individuals who will likely qualify for DACA and DAPA. By being able to live in the United States without fear of deportation and with the ability to work legally, their lives will be changed and our communities positively impacted. Taking away this hope of a better tomorrow would be cruel and immoral.

CMSM is very concerned about H.R. 399, the Secure Our Borders First Act of 2015 introduced by Rep. McCaul (R-10-TX). Under this legislation, individuals living along the border would face increased inspection and racial profiling from police, Border Patrol, and even the National Guard, which could violate constitutional rights under the Fourth Amendment. H.R. 399 also lacks accountability mechanisms that are sorely needed for the Border Patrol, which has seen increased problems with corruption, escalation of force and systemic abuse of migrants as it has doubled in size since 2004.² Instead of this legislation, we should work together to help revitalize border communities, not militarize them. We need to re-imagine "border security" in a different way so that security primarily develops out of building trust, cooperation, and addressing basic human needs.

CMSM is also strongly opposed to H.R. 2278, the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE Act) introduced last year, and any similar legislation to expand interior immigration enforcement efforts. As Catholic Priests and Brothers, we are opposed to

¹ www.whitehouse.gov/immigrationaction

² <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/10/border-patrol-the-green-monster-112220.html#ixzz3Q8y0EMvM>

such legislation that would create new crimes for immigrants and individuals who provide them aid including clergy; expand rather than decrease immigration detention; encourage state and local law enforcement officials to collaborate with immigration enforcement efforts; or decrease protections and immigration relief for certain migrant groups.³ Faith groups are also unanimously opposed to legislation that would rollback critical anti-trafficking protections for children and individuals seeking protection from persecution, including the misnamed “Protection of Children Act” (H.R.5143) and The Asylum Reform and Border Protection Act (H.R.5137) introduced in the last congress. These bills would roll back the bipartisan Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act signed into law by President Bush and would result in children being returned back into hands of traffickers, gangs and others who seek to exploit them.

CMSM encourages all Members of Congress to reject these proposals, both in upcoming discussions about the DHS appropriations bill and regarding future legislation. As faith leaders who work day in and day out with our immigrant brothers and sisters, we celebrate any and all progress that helps them remain in the United States with their families, and we affirm the recent executive orders on immigration and urge all members of Congress to support them as well.

We reject proposals that would criminalize immigrants, militarize our borders and remove critical protections for children and other individuals seeking safety and refuge. We look forward to working with all legislators to ensure a humane and compassionate approach to immigration reform. We invite you to consider this an opportunity to grow in the virtue of hospitality, which welcomes the other, the stranger, and the ones in urgent need.

In Solidarity,



Eli McCarthy, PhD
Director of Justice and Peace
Conference of Major Superiors of Men

The **Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)** supports and offers resources for U.S. leaders of Catholic men’s religious institutes. CMSM promotes dialogue and collaboration on issues of religious life as well as peace and justice issues with major groups in church and society. There are more than 17,000 religious priests and brothers in the United States.

³ <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/say-no-to-the-safe-act/>

