



Committee on Migration

c/o Migration and Refugee Services, USCCB

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February 12, 2018

Dear Senator,

I write on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration (USCCB/COM) to reiterate our support for the swift enactment of a common sense and just legislative solution for Dreamers, young people without immigration status who were brought to the United States by their parents. As you know, the Senate is scheduled to take up legislation in the coming days to address Dreamers. We urge you to consider the following principles as you review that legislation and any proposed amendments to it:

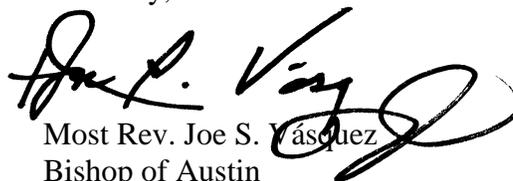
- (1) **Provide Protection to the Dreamer Population**- We agree with the proposal made by President Trump that protection should be given to the larger 1.8 million Dreamer population (instead of solely the 800,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) population), as there are many young people who were brought here as children but were prevented from obtaining DACA due to the program's age cut-offs. We believe that this larger Dreamer population should be included in any legislative solution that the Senate takes up. We urge you to support amendments, if necessary, to accomplish this goal and to oppose amendments that would narrow the class of individuals who would obtain relief under the legislation.
- (2) **Provide a Path to Citizenship**- We agree with the proposal made by President Trump to afford relief to Dreamers that permits them to apply for U.S. citizenship. Most of these young people know the United States as their only home and should not be denied the opportunity to obtain U.S. citizenship and fully participate and integrate into American civic life. We urge you to support amendments, if necessary, that would provide a path to citizenship for persons obtaining relief through this legislation and to oppose amendments that would deny them this opportunity.
- (3) **Promote Family Unity and Maintain the Family-Immigration System**- Family immigration is the foundation of our country and of our Church. Pope Francis states, "the family is the foundation of co-existence and a remedy against social fragmentation." Upholding and protecting the family unit, regardless of its national origins or its size, is vital to our faith and to our country. We are deeply disturbed by proposals that provide relief for Dreamers at the expense of dismantling our country's rich tradition of family reunification and sponsorship of close family members and ending the diversity visa program. We ask you to reject provisions or amendments to this legislation that would threaten family-based immigration.

- (4) **Protect the Vulnerable Who Seek Refuge-** A solution for Dreamers should not come at the expense of other vulnerable immigrants and refugees. It is vital to maintain existing protections for refugees, unaccompanied children, trafficking victims, and asylum seekers that help prevent abuse, ensure access to adequate care, and promote due process. We must continue to welcome and serve the vulnerable and ask you to reject provisions or amendments that undermine protections for refugees, unaccompanied children, trafficking victims, and asylum seekers.
- (5) **Ensure that All Border Security Measures Are Humane and Proportionate-** The Catholic Church has long recognized the right of nations to secure their borders and control entry into their countries. At the same time, we believe that border security and interior immigration enforcement practices should be humane and proportionate; they should make the country safer, and they should not sacrifice the due process rights and human dignity of persons seeking protection.

We believe that the urgent, longstanding need to provide relief for Dreamers is a discrete matter that should not be delayed or hindered by unrelated, controversial provisions. Accordingly, we are concerned by a number of unrelated suggestions that have been proposed as a price for providing the just relief that Dreamers need. We would oppose the inclusion of such provisions in the legislation that the Senate is poised to take up. We urge you to reject such provisions and amendments. At a minimum, we urge you to consider the dignity of the human person and protection of the vulnerable when you examine any border security, interior immigration enforcement or large-scale reform amendments that are proposed to this legislation.

An overwhelming majority of Americans agree that Dreamers need a permanent legislative solution. We support these young people who are contributors to our economy and leaders in our parishes and communities. A legislative solution for Dreamers would further unite us as a country and advance the common good. We remain committed to work with Congress to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe S. Vásquez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Most Rev. Joe S. Vásquez
Bishop of Austin
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration