April 21, 2021

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

VIA EMAIL

Dear Representative:

I write on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Migration (USCCB/COM) to express our support for H.R. 1333, the “National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants Act” (“NO BAN Act”), and H.R. 1573, the “Access to Counsel Act of 2021”, bills that the U.S. House of Representatives is scheduled to take up today.

The NO BAN Act was originally introduced during the 116th Congress, and it sought to end a series of executive actions that negatively impacted refugees, lawful immigrants, and their families. USCCB/COM opposed those actions and has, historically, opposed other actions that undermine our country’s longstanding commitment to, and implementation of, refugee and asylum protections. Particularly troubling was the use of immigration and refugee bans based on religious belief. While these actions are no longer in effect, the NO BAN Act would provide vital protections aimed at preventing future administrations from imposing similar policies. At the same time, it would still allow for temporary and narrow restrictions when “specific and credible facts” indicate a threat to U.S. interests, such as national security or public safety.

The Access to Counsel Act would provide legal protections to individuals being considered for admission to the United States and in secondary or deferred inspection by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). More specifically, it would provide them with crucial access to legal counsel, as well as access to family and close associates, at their own expense. It would strengthen due process for these individuals, including U.S. nationals and those with existing, unexpired immigrant visas. Moreover, the act would aid CBP in carrying out its inspection function accurately and efficiently and reduce unnecessary delays at ports of entry.

Catholic social teaching recognizes the duty and responsibility of governments to protect their citizens by properly controlling their borders. However, governments have an equally important obligation to accommodate the right of migration, especially when family unity is at stake. The NO BAN Act would prevent executive actions that discriminate on the basis of religion or unnecessarily restrict access to lawful migration, while respecting the potential need for national security and public safety measures. The Access to Counsel Act would meaningfully strengthen access to due process and increase efficiency of our immigration system overall.
We ask you to support these two bills when they are brought before the full House of Representatives. Thank you for your attention to these urgent issues.

Sincerely,

Most Rev. Mario E. Dorsonville  
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington  
Chair, USCCB Committee on Migration