



October 31, 2013

Dear Speaker Boehner and Members of Congress:

The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, who stand in solidarity with immigrants seeking fullness of life, implore you to take immediate action to pass just and humane immigration reform in the House of Representatives. We believe any true reform must include these following principles:

- **Create a process for undocumented immigrants to earn their legal status and eventual citizenship**
- **Uphold family unity as a priority**
- **Restore due process protections and reform detention policies**
- **Protect workers and provide efficient channels of entry for new migrant workers**

While we were encouraged by the bi-partisan immigration reform legislation in the Senate, we are disturbed by the lack of attention it has received in the House of Representatives. Moreover, we are worried that the current piecemeal bills neglect to achieve our fundamental priorities. We feel compelled to stress how important a pathway to citizenship and family reunification are for the Sisters of Mercy and for the communities we serve. As women religious, we cherish the human dignity of all people. We know how undocumented immigrants are often deprived of humane treatment, live in fear and suffer many hardships. The continuation of these societal inequalities is of grave concern to us and a violation of the values upon which this country was founded. **This is why we are adamant that any immigration reform must include a pathway to citizenship, so no one in our country is obligated to continue living in the shadows of society or forever be relegated to a permanent legal resident status.**

Our commitment to immigration reform comes from our 182 years of ministering to and with immigrants in schools, hospitals, parishes and social service centers. Through our direct service, we have seen the impact of many families ripped apart by our broken immigration system. Our Catholic faith upholds the value of the family structure for the betterment of individuals and their communities. **Every day that legislation is not passed, hundreds of families are forcefully separated by deportation. There is an urgent need to address immigration reform because the current inaction is stripping children of their parents and other relatives.**

The Sisters of Mercy understand that eventual reform will include border and interior enforcement, yet efforts to appease the most extreme members of Congress cannot be part of any final legislation. **Such proposed policies as the SAFE Act (H.R.2278), would harm our communities by increasing racial profiling, distracting law enforcement from targeting real criminal threats and fostering a distrust of police.** Furthermore, the SAFE Act would criminalize faith groups and humanitarian agencies that refuse to turn away any person in need, including undocumented immigrants.

We remind you that polling shows that the overwhelming majority of the American public support positive immigration reform with an earned path to citizenships. We will continue to pray that the House of Representatives will find the moral fortitude to pass laws that reflect the will of the American people.

Sincerely,

*Patricia McDermott, RSM*

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President of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas