



**TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF THE MOST REVEREND KATHARINE JEFFERTS
SCHORI, PRESIDING BISHOP AND PRIMATE OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

**SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
“HEARING ON COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM LEGISLATION”
APRIL 19, 2013**

We affirm that human beings are made in the image of God, created with dignity and intrinsic value. Dignified and productive work is one way in which people give expression to that divine creativity, and people often migrate in search of it. This Church seeks to uphold the rights of people to seek dignified possibility in life – what this nation calls “the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” That includes the ability to seek work which will support and nurture individuals and their families, and the opportunity to contribute to building a just society – what the Church calls a reflection of the kingdom of God. Immigration reform is a proximate, this-worldly, way of moving toward that vision of a just society.

The Episcopal Church has long advocated for immigration reform, and we are encouraged by many of the changes proposed in the bipartisan Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013. We thank Senators Charles Schumer (D-NY), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), John McCain (R-AZ), Jeff Flake (R-AZ), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Michael Bennet (D-CO) for their tireless work to reach consensus and compromise on this issue.

We are pleased to see a pathway to citizenship for those already living in the United States but caution against a pathway that involves unjust or overly onerous burdens. Unquantifiable expectations for border security are not likely to constitute a fair component of this process.

Family reunification long has been at the heart of our nation’s immigration system, and we are pleased to see that the Senate bill contains significant streamlining and expediting of the reunification process for citizens and green-card holders. We do not support further restrictions on the ability of residents to bring family members to join them. We are gravely disappointed, however, that even as many families will experience the joy of reunification, some families and family members have been excluded from the Senate bill. As the process moves forward, we will strongly urge the inclusion of same-sex partners and spouses in the legislation. Every family deserves to live in unity.

We are delighted at the proposals to expedite the regularizing of the status of children unknowingly brought to this country, and realizing the hopes initially raised in the DREAM Act. The bipartisan bill’s additional protections for vulnerable migrant children, asylum seekers and refugees, and – for the first time under U.S. law – the stateless, also will come as welcome news to Episcopal communities, many of whom work daily to help these populations rebuild their lives peacefully in the United States



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Efforts to expand the creativity and productivity of United States society through a variety of guest worker visas that include access to a pathway to citizenship certainly accord with priorities of The Episcopal Church, particularly when they answer the hopes and dreams of those in other parts of the world seeking work. We applaud provisions within the bill to protect foreign workers brought to the U.S. through abuse and trafficking and will continue to advocate that all visas are provided in ways that are not exploitative.

As lawmakers prepare to debate this historic step toward comprehensive immigration reform, Episcopalians stand ready to advocate for policies that build a just and welcoming society for all God's people.

