An Open Letter in Support of Immigration Reform

Date: June 12, 2013

To: The Illinois Congressional Delegation and All People of Faith Across Illinois

From: Clergy and Leaders of Diverse Faith Communities in Illinois

As representatives of the diverse faith communities of Illinois, we uphold the value of welcoming the stranger with love and compassion and recognize this as a moral mandate to enact humane and equitable immigration reform. We urge Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform in 2013 and stand united and committed to working through the upcoming legislative process along with leaders of the business community and immigrant rights advocates. Together we believe in and endorse the following principles:

FEDERAL SOLUTIONS: Immigration policy is a federal issue between the U.S. government and other countries—not Illinois and other countries. We urge Illinois’ congressional delegation to lead bi-partisan efforts to create an immigration system that works and protects our national borders. We urge state leaders to adopt reasonable policies addressing immigrants already here, and to assist in the integration of immigrants in Illinois including the opportunity for an earned path to legalization and citizenship.

LAW ENFORCEMENT: We respect the rule of law and support law enforcement’s role in keeping our communities safe. Local law enforcement resources should focus on enforcing Illinois laws, rather than violations of federal immigration code.

FAMILIES: Strong families are the foundation of successful communities. We oppose policies that unnecessarily divide families through deportation. We champion policies that keep families united and improve the health, education and well-being of all Illinois children.

ECONOMY: Illinois depends on the vitality and success of our business sector. We value the economic role immigrants play as workers, both high and low-skilled, and as entrepreneurs, consumers, and taxpayers. Illinois’s immigration policies must reaffirm our global reputation as a welcoming and business-friendly state.

A FREE SOCIETY: Immigrants helped build the state of Illinois, and have been integral to our state’s unique combination of strong Midwestern values and true diversity. As we move forward in a globalizing world, we should remember this rich history and continue to be an inclusive, fair state for immigrants.

We collectively voice our commitment to fair, effective and humane immigration reform that meets the needs of America in the 21st century. Our respective faiths share the understanding that we are all created in the divine image impelling us to welcome the stranger and treat all human beings with dignity and respect. We applaud the bi-partisan efforts of our elected leaders to create a new immigration process that is consistent with our values and that strengthens our nation.

Signed,

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Fr. Larry Dowling, Pastor, St. Agatha; Priests for Justice for Immigrants
Guy Medaglia, President/CEO, St. Anthony Hospital
Rabbi Michael Zedek, Senior Rabbi, Emanuel Congregation; Chicago Board of Rabbis
Mike Rolfes, Executive Director, Renew Chicago
Rev. Larry Greenfield, Executive Minister, American Baptist Churches
Mohammed Kaiseruddin, Chairman, Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago
Lawrence Benito, Executive Director/CEO, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Rev. Victoria Curtiss, Associate Pastor for Mission, Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago
Dr. John Fuder, Director Justice/Compassion, Resource Global
E. Garnet Fay, Clerk, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Rev. Stanley Davis, Co-Executive Director, Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago
Elena Segura, Director, Office of Immigrant Affairs, Archdiocese of Chicago
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