



CONGRESS MUST MOVE THE DREAM FORWARD: A STATEMENT FROM THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF MARYLAND

October 2013

The people of Maryland embraced an important first step in the fair treatment of our immigrant community when they voted last year to uphold our state's DREAM Act allowing them to attend our public colleges and universities. Thanks to that victory, undocumented immigrant students in Maryland now have the same opportunity as their classmates to pay in-state tuition rates when they pursue higher education.

Now it is time for Congress to move their dream forward. These young men and women deserve the security of knowing their family can remain intact, their parents can work legally and safely, and that their future holds the promise of one day becoming a citizen of the only country they have ever called home.

We applaud the U.S. Senate for passing a comprehensive immigration reform bill, and we urge all members of Maryland's delegation in the House of Representatives to support efforts to pass a similar measure as soon as

possible. We recognize that the elements of such legislation must appropriately balance necessary safeguards for securing our borders and averting future illegal immigration. Our concern is first and foremost, however, the human needs of immigrants who have come to our country seeking the same dream as our own ancestors, often to escape dangerous and desperate conditions in their native lands.

It is time to fix our broken immigration system and bring from out of the shadows those who labor in our fields, care for our elderly, build and maintain our homes and lawns, and who work tirelessly at jobs many Americans refuse to fill.

We encourage all Maryland Catholics to ask their Congressional representatives to support an immigration reform bill that provides a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, preserves family unity, allows a legal path for low-skilled workers to obtain employment, and addresses factors in other countries that

force immigrants to leave their home.

As the leaders of the three (arch)dioceses serving 1.2 million Catholics in Maryland, we pray that the voice of Maryland's Catholic community will convey hope to our immigrant sisters and brothers, and will inspire our elected officials to act with courage and compassion on their behalf. As Pope Francis has said, "We pray for a heart which will embrace immigrants. God will judge us upon how we have treated the most needy."

To contact members of Congress, or to learn more, visit the website of the Maryland Catholic Conference at www.mdcathcon.org/Immigration

