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A STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION

The immigration issues confronting the country continue to test the political and moral integrity of our nation. They also challenge our diverse faith communities to speak and act out of the central teachings and obligations of their faiths.

In this light, the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago issues the following statement.

We are deeply concerned that this largely immigrant nation, representing the world's rich diversity of cultures and religions, should be found indicting the broad base of today's immigrants as threats to the nation's security, economic health, and character.

Equally troubling are realities that fuel the nation's economy with cheap, unprotected labor, benefiting primarily those of means while condemning those without influence or power to unconscionable wages and working conditions, and aggravating conflict between groups at the bottom of the nation's economic ladder.

Legislation is needed that:

- Protects the human rights of all persons, irrespective of citizenship.
- Does not criminalize immigrants or those who provide humanitarian aid to immigrants.
- Establishes provisions for essential border security.
- Creates minimum wage provisions for all workers.
- Requires the documenting of immigrant employment and compensation.
- Provides pathways to citizenship based on a record of employment, payment of all reasonably due taxes, and good behavior.
- Encourages family unification.
- Promotes U.S. foreign policies that reduce incentives for illegal immigration.

The challenge is complex and easily becomes divisive. There are no simple or partial solutions. Nevertheless, national, comprehensive immigration reform is long overdue. We call upon our political leaders to act.

Of equal importance, we call upon the members of our religious communities to examine how the teachings of their traditions inform the debate about immigration policy and to bring the social and moral values from their religious heritage to the public discussion and decision making. People of faith cannot be silent. It is time both to speak and to act.

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