



HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

P.O. Box 1011 | Washington, D.C. 20013-1011
www.hbadc.org

May 22, 2013

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senate
Russell Senate Office Building, SR-437
Washington, DC 20510-4502

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Building, SH-135
Washington, DC 20510-1501

RE: Support for Amendment to S.744: Coons 10 (DAV13371) – Guarantee of Professional, Commercial, and Business Licenses for Registered Provisional Immigrants

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of the Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia (“HBA-DC”),¹ I write to express the Association’s support for the continuing work in Congress towards comprehensive immigration reform. In particular, HBA-DC urges you to adopt the amendment to S.744 known as Coons 10.

HBA-DC has long supported the DREAM Act. Most recently, in December 2012, HBA-DC informed Senators Reid and McConnell that passage of the DREAM Act was a “first priority” in any comprehensive immigration reform bill. The right to work is one of the core principles of the DREAM Act, and it is a right that is safeguarded by Coons 10.

Coons 10 guarantees that those with Registered Provisional Immigrant (“RPI”) status have the right to work in fields of employment that require licenses, such as the ability to practice law.² The amendment supports the principle that immigration status by itself should not bar attorneys, or those in any licensed field, from practicing their profession.

As you know, S.744 requires that RPIs become economically self-sufficient. Coons 10 helps guarantee that RPIs will be able to achieve that goal. Historically, immigrants who have gained employment in licensed professions have increased their income potential exponentially. Thus, Coons 10 will allow RPIs to better integrate themselves and their families into society, and to pay taxes.

¹ The HBA-DC is a non-profit organization established in the District of Columbia in 1977. The HBA-DC membership includes several hundred lawyers practicing in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, Latino students attending local law schools, and other non-lawyers who join as associate members.

² This is not an abstract concern. Currently, at least two persons are being refused bar licenses based solely on their immigration status. See *In re Sergio C. Garcia on Admission*, S202512 (Cal. 2012); *Florida Board of Bar Examiners Re: Question as to Whether Undocumented Immigrants are Eligible for Admission to the Florida Bar*, SC11-256J (Fla. 2011).

The passage of comprehensive immigration reform is likely to see the growth of cases in which immigrants are barred from licensed professions due to their immigration status. Thus, it is imperative to have clear law in place so that the rights of these workers are protected and they do not find themselves in a legal limbo for years as they struggle for their licenses in court. Given the importance of the right to work in our national economy, HBA-DC expresses its full support for Coons 10 and urges this critical amendment's adoption.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact HBA-DC's Legislative & Policy Issues Committee Chairperson Eissa M. Villaseñor at: eissa.villasenor@gmail.com. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Very truly yours,



Eissa M. Villaseñor
Chairperson
Legislative & Policy Issues Committee

Cc: The Honorable Chuck Schumer
The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
The Honorable Dick Durbin
The Honorable Jeff Sessions
The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
The Honorable Lindsey Graham
The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
The Honorable John Cornyn
The Honorable Al Franken
The Honorable Michael S. Lee
The Honorable Christopher A. Coons
The Honorable Ted Cruz
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
The Honorable Jeff Flake
The Honorable Mazie Hirono