



# HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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December 14, 2015

*Via First Class Mail and Electronic Mail*

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
United States House Speaker  
1233 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
United States House Minority Leader  
235 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

The Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia (“HBA-DC”) supports legislation that helps achieve comprehensive immigration reform, such as S. 744, passed by the U.S. Senate during the 113th Congress (2013-2014). HBA-DC supports any equivalent legislation in the House of Representatives that would accomplish the same comprehensive immigration reform goals without taking an enforcement-only approach.

First, HBA-DC supports, as a pressing priority, passage of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (“DREAM”) Act. We believe that the DREAM Act is a fair and just resolution to the unjust difficulties faced by undocumented immigrants brought to this country as children who find themselves, as Americans in all but legal status, in the position of being unable to continue their education or otherwise contribute to the society of the country they know as home.

Second, HBA-DC also supports legislation, such as the Coons-10 Amendment (“Coons 10”), passed by the Senate and incorporated into S. 744 in 2013, which provides immigrants with access to professional careers. Coons 10 clarifies the right of Registered Provisional Immigrants to work in fields of employment that require licenses, such as the practice of law. Comprehensive immigration reform may see the growth of cases in which immigrants are barred from licensed professions due to their legal 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.

HBA-DC urges, once again, that the House of Representatives pass meaningful immigration reform legislation. Consistent with our mission to promote equal justice for all Hispanics, the HBA-DC supports reform of our nation's immigration laws and efforts to address our undocumented immigrant population. To that end, the HBA-DC supports legislation that addresses the following issues:

- Feasible and humane immigration and border policies that enhance security, help reunite families, protect immigrant workers, promote citizenship and civic participation, and do not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, religion, ethnicity, or country of origin;
- Fair and just treatment of children and adults while in custody, including due process and access to justice;
- Increased penalties for individuals engaged in the business of human smuggling and trafficking;
- Increased funds for our immigration courts to address current backlogs and continued efforts to ensure that individuals in immigration proceedings are treated fairly;
- A program of earned adjustment to legal status that leads to citizenship for undocumented workers who are willing to fulfill reasonable requirements;
- A temporary worker program that can provide for labor that is needed by American industries;
- Equitable wages and improved working conditions for immigrant workers;
- Employment verification processes that are fair to both employers and employees;
- Eligibility for immigrant students already in this country to continue their education through college and to earn a path to legal permanent residency;
- Acceptance of the contributions made by faith-based non-profit organizations and others that provide services to immigrants regardless of their legal status;

- More effective enforcement of the immigration laws without criminalizing immigrants, without subjecting immigrants to mandatory deportation, indefinite detention, and denial of due process, and without giving local and state police unprecedented and legally inappropriate authority to enforce federal immigration laws that would compromise public safety and unfairly target particular immigrant communities; and,
- Dedicated federal grants to state and local governments to provide language services and language access to social programs.

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. The HBA-DC is affiliated with the Hispanic National Bar Association, and we support their efforts in this endeavor as well. We thank you for your attention and consideration of our concerns.

Very truly yours,



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Juan M. Sempertegui  
President  
Hispanic Bar Association of DC



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Mara C. Giorgio  
Chairperson  
Legislative & Policy Issues Committee