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The Time Is Right for Immigration Reform

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(Corpus Christi, TX) - At Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Corpus Christi, along with our sister Catholic Charities agencies in the state of Texas, we were glad to see the recent Senate vote to overwhelmingly pass immigration reform. This bill is the result of difficult compromises and is a major step forward in the push to fix our broken immigration system. Now the debate will shift to the House of Representatives where we expect the leaders to continue the Senate's momentum and produce an equitable, just, and bipartisan bill.

At Catholic Charities, we support the leadership of our United States Bishops, who launched the Justice for Immigrants Campaign and became a leading voice for protecting and welcoming migrants and refugees through comprehensive immigration reform. We need immigration reform that serves the best interests of our country - a solution that unifies families and gives them the legal right to work and support themselves, secures our borders with just and humane enforcement policies, implements an employment verification system, provides protections for refugees and other vulnerable populations including children and victims of human trafficking and other serious crimes, provides a fair means for those who are here undocumented to earn citizenship and allows high-skilled and other needed legal immigrants such as agricultural workers to work here and help grow our economy.

At Catholic Charities, where our agencies served thousands of families across the state, we see families torn apart by the current immigration system. Those who came here seeking a better life for themselves or their children live in constant fear and uncertainty.

But when Congress passes immigration reform legislation, these families can come out of the shadows and embrace our country in new and meaningful ways. Young adults or "Dreamers," whose only crime was to enter the country illegally without their own volition, and who have excelled in high school and college, will be able to achieve their potential and become productive members of the country they now call their own.

At Catholic Charities, we have long supported fair and humane immigration reform and believe that it will have a significant economic impact. Economists are predicting economic gains in terms of growth, earnings, tax revenues, and jobs. Immigrants are not only workers, but they are also consumers, small business owners, and tax payers.

In fact, the Congressional Budget Office released a report that shows that comprehensive immigration reform will boost economic output.

At Catholic Charities, we support the advocacy work of our religious sisters, who recently concluded advocacy trips across the U. S. to support immigration reform. These "Nuns on a Bus" reminded us that everyone is made in the image and likeness of God and that due to economic and political hardships; many are forced to cross our borders and seek a new and safe life. We join them in urging our nation's leaders to act compassionately during the debates and ignore the hateful, prejudicial attacks against immigrants.

We hope, pray and ask the House to vote for immigration reform. Many people of faith from all denominations are also hoping, praying, and asking the House of Representatives to do the right thing. **The time is now.**

Catholic Charities is the social services arm of the Diocese of Corpus Christi

and is part of the Catholic Social Services network in Texas which served a

combined total of more than 766,000 Texans in 2012.