

Statement of Kevin Appleby, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

On behalf of the U.S. Catholic bishops, I would like to thank Senators Clinton, Hagel, and Menendez for their leadership in attempting to ensure that family reunification remains the cornerstone of the U.S. immigration system. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) stands with them in their efforts to protect families in the immigration legislation being considered by the U.S. Senate.

The Senate compromise legislation restricts family unity in several areas. It keeps families apart in both the legalization and temporary worker program and it eviscerates long-standing family preference categories in lieu of a merit-system skewed toward the highly-skilled and highly-educated of higher economic means.

As a nation, we must carefully consider whether we should abandon families in our immigration system. Immigrant families start businesses, keep each other off government dependency, and invest in their new nation. They are the backbone of immigrant communities and have helped build our nation. While their contributions to our nation's social fabric are not easily quantifiable, to forsake them would, in the view of the bishops, be short-sighted and not serve our nation's best interests.

The amendment to be offered by Senators Clinton, Hagel, and Menendez would restore an element of family unity to the compromise bill. We urge its adoption. As written, the Senate bill leaves family values at the Rio Grande.