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Statement on Proposed Immigration Legislation By the Catholic Bishops of Kansas

March 10, 2011

House Judiciary Committee Hearing on HB 2372

We recognize and fully support the rule of law in order to promote the common good of all citizens. We also recognize the right and duty of the State (in this case the Federal Government) to control our national borders and to regulate the flow of immigrants into our Country. We are nonetheless painfully aware of the fact that our immigration system is broken. Ineffective immigration laws and inconsistent application of them have resulted in making it unreasonably burdensome for many to immigrate legally into the United States, while at the same time allowing millions to enter illegally.

In this light, rather than insist on the enforcement of an ineffective system, we would plead for broad reform. With respect to the oft-cited need for border control, we would urge the Federal government in the most humane way possible to solve this issue and then move expeditiously to expand significantly the opportunity for legal immigration.

Attempting indiscriminately to punish undocumented immigrants currently in the United States can only result in chaos for our nation. Why would we expel hardworking, family oriented, God-fearing, and otherwise law-abiding members of our society who have come to acquire those things needed for basic human dignity? Our country would stand to benefit, for example, by their providing a much-needed labor force and by young workers contributing to the Social Security system.

We find particularly objectionable the portion of the bill that would potentially criminalize the offering of assistance to a person here illegally by a representative of a church. We do not believe that a church should be held liable for ministering to an illegal immigrant in material and/or spiritual terms.

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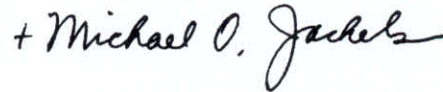
The full scope of our immigration system is so dysfunctional that it cannot be “fixed” by simply insisting that people go home and take their place in line, or by criminalizing productive members of our national, state and local communities. The United States and Kansas can and must do better.

Thank you for your consideration.

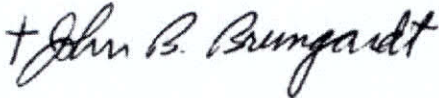
Yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann
Archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas



Most Reverend Michael O. Jackels
Bishop of Wichita



Most Reverend John B. Brungardt
Bishop of Dodge City



Very Reverend Barry E. Brinkman
Diocesan Administrator of Salina