



**Committee on Migration
Migration and Refugee Services, USCCB**

January 23, 2017

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the Committee on Migration of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB/COM) and Catholic Charities USA we write in support of H.R. 496 the “Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy (BRIDGE) Act.” This bipartisan legislation was recently introduced in the 115th Congress by Representatives Mike Coffman (R-CO) and Luis Gutierrez (D-IL), and we ask that you consider co-sponsoring this important measure.

As you may know, the BRIDGE Act/H.R. 496 would provide temporary relief from deportation and ensure employment authorization to individuals who are eligible for the Department of Homeland Security’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. It would accomplish this by providing DACA-eligible individuals with “provisional protected presence” and employment authorization. Applicants would be required to pay a reasonable fee, be subject to criminal background checks, and meet a number of eligibility criteria indicating that they: (1) came to the United States as minors, (2) grew up in this country; (3) have pursued an education or have served in the military; (4) have not committed any serious crimes; and (5) do not pose a threat to our country. Temporary protection under the BRIDGE Act would ensure that these young people can continue to work and study and be protected from deportation while Congress debates broader legislation to fix our broken immigration system.

There are more than 750,000 young people who have received and benefitted from DACA. They are contributors to our economy, veterans of our military, academic standouts in our universities, and leaders in our parishes and communities. As Catholics, we have long supported DACA youth and their families as we believe in protecting the dignity of every human

being, especially that of our children. These young people entered the U.S. as children and know America as their only home.

While we endorse the BRIDGE Act/H.R. 496 and support DACA youth, we note that DACA and the provisional protected presence status in the measure are temporary substitutes for larger legislative reform of our immigration laws that our country so desperately needs. We vow to work with Congress and the new Administration to reform our immigration system in a humane and common-sense manner.

Enactment of the BRIDGE Act/ H.R. 496 would help ensure that these individuals, who were brought to the United States as children and are contributing so much to our nation, can continue to live their lives free of the anxiety that they could be deported at any time to a country they do not know and separated from their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe P. Vásquez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joe" and the last name "Vásquez" clearly legible.

Most Reverend Joe Vásquez
Chairman, Committee on Migration
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sr. Donna Markham, OP, PhD". The signature is cursive and includes the initials "OP, PhD" at the end.

Sr. Donna Markham, OP, PhD
President and CEO
Catholic Charities USA