



## **Shriver Center Position Statement**

### **S.1348 Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007**

The comprehensive immigration bill now being debated in the Senate is a first step on a difficult path of reform. While it does contain a plan for how to treat the 12 million undocumented immigrants, the comprehensive immigration reform bill falls short of each of our criteria for immigration reform and includes many other poorly conceived provisions. We believe the process should proceed, but we urge the Senate and House to improve this bill.

The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law released a policy statement on immigration reform last year in which we pledged to support comprehensive reform of our immigration laws that:

- promotes family reunification.
- creates a reasonable path to legalization for hard-working undocumented immigrants.
- does not restrict or eliminate judicial review, expand summary detention and removal, or otherwise deny immigrants the due process of law.

Unfortunately, the comprehensive immigration reform bill now being debated in the Senate fails each of these criteria and includes many other poorly conceived provisions. While we oppose key provisions of this legislation, we do recognize that the senate bill lays the groundwork for a more humane path to citizenship. However, we will not support final passage of comprehensive immigration reform legislation unless the Senate bill improves significantly as it moves through the legislative process. Toward that end, we highlight some provisions that must be addressed.

The Senate bill does not promote family reunification. Indeed, it does just the opposite, jettisoning our decades-old family-based immigration system that allows American citizens and immigrants to bring close family members here, and replacing it with a new “merits-based” points system designed to favor high-skilled, English speaking people.

The Senate bill does not create a reasonable path to legalization for hard-working undocumented immigrants. Rather, undocumented immigrants would have to wait at least eight to thirteen years before they could adjust to lawful permanent resident status, and could be deported if they fail to maintain continuous full-time employment or school attendance during that time. Further, the head of household would be required to return to their country of origin to apply for legalization, pay fines of over \$8500, and could not

petition for their spouses and minor children who live abroad to join them here while they are waiting.

The Senate bill includes some of the same provisions that compromise the due process rights of immigrants as were included in the infamous Sensenbrenner legislation introduced last year.

The Senate bill creates a guest worker program that would produce a permanent underclass of uneducated, poorly paid, temporary workers that would depress wages and working conditions for American workers. These guest workers would be required to return to their home countries for one year after every two years worked and would have no possibility of ever becoming permanent residents. In short, the proposed guest worker program is unfair, unworkable and unrealistic and will lead to the same widespread flaunting of the law as occurs today.

The Senate bill also includes a provision that would cause millions of workers to live their retirement years in deep poverty, despite the hard-earned taxes they have paid, by requiring immigrants who have worked and paid into the Social Security system for years to forfeit all of the contributions they have made before obtaining a newly issued social security number.

The status quo, with families being broken up by continuing raids and other enforcement, and people dying in the desert because there is no legal way for them to enter the country, is intolerable. Therefore, we believe the bipartisan effort at comprehensive immigration reform that has begun in the Senate should proceed. However, the bill must improve significantly as it moves through the legislative process.