

Letter from Catholic Bishops of North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina to members of Congress in the three states:

As the pastoral leaders of the Catholic Church in Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina, we are touched by the faith-filled lives of immigrants in our churches, our schools, our communities and our families. These individuals have become a vital part of the fabric of our local areas and make substantial contributions to our economic and social life. These brothers and sisters are a source of great hope and promise to us all.

We write to urge you to continue working for comprehensive reform of immigration law through civil dialogue, in the spirit of cooperation and love. It is our hope the Senate and the House of Representatives will collaborate to produce a fair and just resolution to the situations that threaten to tear apart our communities. Enforcement-only measures do not realistically address the substantive issues facing our country.

Immigration is a moral concern impacting the human dignity and human rights of every person. We and our brother bishops of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops support an approach to immigration reform which includes policies to address the economic root causes of migration in the sending countries; reform of our legal immigration system, including a viable and workable path to citizenship; a temporary worker program which protects the rights of all workers; family-based immigration reform which reduces waiting times for family reunification; and the restoration of due process protections for immigrants.

We support these reforms because every day we witness the human consequences of an immigration system which is severely flawed. We are particularly distressed by the recent tragedies of our brothers and sisters who are faced with the escalation in deportation enforcement in our states. The drumbeat of dehumanizing rhetoric constantly threatens the peace and well-being of our communities, causing an increase in suffering and fear among some of the most vulnerable ones.

Comprehensive immigration reform would increase our national security, not weaken it. It is profoundly unjust to place the responsibility for acts of terrorism, perpetuated by a few criminals, at the door of immigrants who are working hard to serve us, while seeking a basic livelihood for themselves and their families. It is equally unjust to use our newcomers as scapegoats of the economic and political troubles in our nation.

We ask you to see the faces of the children separated from their parents. We ask you to hear the cries of the workers who daily risk serious injury laboring in the factories and fields. We ask you to feel the fear in the hearts of those who are not safe in the neighborhoods where they live.

Enacting comprehensive and fair immigration reform will help heal our communities and provide for a secure and prosperous future for all our children. Your reply to our letter will be greatly appreciated.

We will continue to reach out to the people who are most vulnerable through Catholic Charities and the 468 parishes and missions in Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. We are asking God's blessings on you and those you love.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

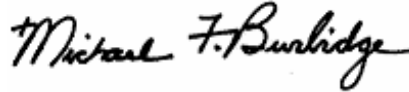
Handwritten signatures of Wilton D. Gregory and Robert J. Baker in blue ink, separated by a plus sign.

Most Rev. Wilton D. Gregory
Archbishop of Atlanta

Most Rev. Robert J. Baker
Bishop of Charleston

Handwritten signature of J. Kevin Boland in blue ink, preceded by a plus sign.

Most Rev. J. Kevin Boland
Bishop of Savannah

Handwritten signature of Michael F. Burbidge in blue ink, preceded by a plus sign.

Most Rev. Michael Burbidge
Bishop of Raleigh

Handwritten signature of Peter J. Jugis in blue ink, preceded by a plus sign.

Most Rev. Peter J. Jugis
Bishop of Charlotte