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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **A Statement of the Roman Catholic Bishops of Massachusetts on Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

The victory for comprehensive immigration reform achieved in the vote of the U.S. Senate is a major step along the road to a new future for immigrants to this country. This crucial victory now leads to an equally important vote in the U.S. House of Representatives. At this juncture in the legislative process, it is useful to reflect briefly on the significance of comprehensive immigration reform for the United States. The challenge this issue poses for us as citizens of one of the most diverse societies in the world is multidimensional: moral and legal; political and economic; an issue important for both domestic politics and U.S. foreign policy. It invites us as Americans to continue one of our best traditions – welcoming the stranger – and to recognize the challenges and opportunities of a globalized economy.

Fifty years ago John F. Kennedy said of another issue – civil rights – that it was as old as the Scriptures and as clear as our Constitution. Immigration reform has its own biblical basis and constitutional objectives. In many ways civil rights and comprehensive immigration reform share key political, legal and, at a deeper level, moral characteristics.

The moral content of the issues our nation faced during the struggle for civil rights, and that we face today as we seek comprehensive immigration reform, is about the God given dignity of each person and the protection of human dignity and human rights.

As the Catholic bishops of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, we stand in solidarity with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and its many statements of the past decade in support of comprehensive immigration reform. Most recently, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, the Chair of the USCCB's Committee on Migration said:

Each day in our parishes, social service programs, hospitals and schools, we witness the human consequences of a broken immigration system. Families are separated, migrant workers are exploited, and our fellow human beings die in the desert. Without positive change to our immigration laws, we cannot help our brothers and sisters. Simply put, the status quo is morally unacceptable. This suffering must end.

The Senate vote on June 27, 2013, is a significant step in challenging the morally unacceptable aspects of our present immigration system. Comprehensive reform of the system is a large and complex challenge. At the center of the challenge are critical objectives:

- The primary need is to provide a secure path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented persons already in this country. Proposals which offer less than citizenship as a final objective will not meet the promise of the present moment and should be resisted.
- A complementary objective of comprehensive reform involves effective measures to improve aspects of the security of the nation's borders; this is a legitimate concern for any country. Achieving of this objective, however, should not be used to prevent relief for those presently without citizenship.
- Immigration reform should also be guided by the objective of family reunification. The stability of the family, based on a man, woman, and

children, is as necessary to protect children of immigrants as it is for all of the citizens of this diverse nation.

In the Catholic community, welcoming the immigrant is central to our beliefs and lived out in our institutions. The principles of our moral teaching, convictions about personal dignity, human rights, and the unity of the human family are the foundations of our public advocacy for comprehensive reform. In our schools, social service agencies, and our health care institutions, we encounter daily the faces of those who come to this nation from around the world. They come often from situations of poverty, conflict and upheaval; they come also with hopes and dreams of what America can be for them and their families. As a Church, we seek to join with others in our nation to provide care and resources for their integration into American society. We use this moment after the Senate vote, and facing the important deliberations of the U.S. House of Representatives, to invite reflection and support from our religious community and from our fellow citizens for the essential passage of immigration reform.

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Most Reverend George W. Coleman  
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Most Reverend Timothy A. McDonnell  
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