

A Statement by the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey On In-state Tuition at Public Institutions of Higher Education

For many years, the Catholic Church has spoken out in favor of Comprehensive Immigration Reform. We do this because Scripture tells us to welcome the stranger, serve the poor, protect human dignity, respect all life, and protect the unity of families. We come with no political agenda. We speak out as spiritual and moral leaders, as shepherds taking care of our flocks.

Every day we serve immigrants in our parishes, schools, charitable outreaches, and other institutions. We do so not because they are Catholic, but because we are Catholic. We are called to follow the great commandment: to love God and to love our neighbor. The immigrant, both documented and undocumented, is our neighbor.

In this spirit, we support legislation under consideration that would allow certain undocumented students to qualify for in-state tuition at public colleges and universities if they meet a set of strict criteria. Many of these students came to this country with their parents at a very young age. For many, this is the only home that they know. To deny this higher educational opportunity to someone on the basis of their parents' immigration status is not right.

These young students are New Jerseyans. They worship at our parishes, are graduating from our schools and are members of our youth groups. These students should be given the same opportunity that their classmates and neighbors are being given.

What could be better for the future of our state than educating motivated students to take their rightful place in society? These students will help to make New Jersey stronger in the national and global economies. Noteworthy, the New Jersey Presidents' Council for Higher Education also supports this legislation.

As pastors, we look to the future with hope and fairness. Because we seek what is best for our youth and for our State, we support legislation to allow in-state tuition for students who meet the strict criteria in the proposed legislation.

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