

# Catholic Conference of Ohio

## Catholic Conference of Ohio's Concerns Regarding HB 654: State Immigration Enforcement

September 20, 2006

The Catholic Conference of Ohio acknowledges the right and responsibility of the State to help in the implementation and enforcement of federal laws. HB 654 is an attempt by the state to implement and enforce existing federal immigration laws. We continue, however, to have questions and concerns over whether this type of legislation is needed and helpful.

We highlight the following concerns:

1. We believe the federal immigration law is unjust and unnecessarily restrictive. Ohio should show judicious restraint in pursuing state enforcement legislation while important debate over law changes continues at the federal level.
2. We believe that a study commission should be established prior to pursuing HB 654. The study commission should be comprised of interested parties including federal and state officials, business and religious leaders, and worker representatives.
3. We believe that state emphasis on enforcement will be "harmfully provocative" during this time of heightened rhetoric and violence against immigrant workers in Ohio.
4. We prefer that the Ohio General Assembly use its political clout to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level. Such reform should include a more workable *guest worker* program and provide a viable path to citizenship for current immigrant workers.
5. HB 654 duplicates existing federal law restrictions and leaves many unanswered questions as to the details and costs of specific components of state and federal agreements (M.O.U.'s).
6. We believe that HB 654 leaves a false impression that current immigrant workers are more of a security and safety threat to Ohioans than other persons.
7. HB 654 fails to reflect the important and necessary contributions immigrant workers provide to the common good of our state through the work they perform and taxes they pay.

We encourage thoughtful study and dialogue on this extremely complex issue of immigration reform. Our Ohio Catholic Bishops' statement: [God's Welcoming Presence: A Call To Stand In Solidarity With Ohio's Immigrants](#) emphasizes the vital contributions immigrant workers, regardless of their legal status, provide to our communities and our state's economy.



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