



**STATEMENT OF  
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ARAB AMERICAN INSTITUTE  
HEARING ON: COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM LEGISLATION  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**April 19, 2013**

Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley and members of the Committee: I am honored to submit this testimony for the record on behalf of the Arab American Institute in response to the introduction of the "Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act," (S.744) drafted by Senators Bennet, Durbin, Flake, Graham, McCain, Menendez, Rubio, and Schumer.

The Arab American Institute applauds the efforts of the senators who have been working tirelessly to create bi-partisan legislation to address the fundamental problems with our broken immigration system and provide a pathway to citizenship for the nearly 11.5 million undocumented immigrants currently living and working in the United States.

Over the last decade, a number of "national security" initiatives have been added to our already overburdened and inefficient immigration system. The Arab American community believes that real immigration reform must include the termination of enforcement measures that target individuals or communities based on race, religion, or national origin. We are pleased that the legislation includes a section on border security dedicated to preserving and respecting individual civil rights and prohibiting the use of race and ethnicity in federal law enforcement activities. In particular, we are pleased that the bill mandates that additional

resources and training will be devoted to implementing a DHS-wide use of force policy and associated training in appropriate use of force, individual rights, and sensitivity to cultural and environmental impact of federal operations on border communities. We are pleased that a Border Oversight Taskforce will be established to take testimony and conduct hearings in order to review and recommend changes to existing border policies and that racial profiling guidance will be implemented. We are concerned, however, that the bill includes national security exceptions found in Sec. 3305(b)2. Similar national security waiver language has been applied in a number of enforcement measures over the last decade, resulting in real and troubling ramifications for some ethnic and minority communities.

On the issue of family reunification, we are concerned that this bill fails to provide relief to certain family members—particularly siblings and adult married children over age 31. We are heartened by the strong commitment demonstrated in addressing the needs of individuals who, through no fault of their own, are now undocumented and face deportation as young adults. We are pleased that S. 744 provides relief for individuals who entered the U.S. before the age of 16 and who have completed high school in the U.S. by allowing them to apply for Registered Provisional Immigrant (RPI) status through the DREAM Act. We are especially pleased that there is no age cap for the program, which would provide an opportunity for millions of talented individuals to qualify for an expedited process to citizenship.

This comprehensive bi-partisan bill offers some fundamental solutions to our flawed immigration system and we applaud the efforts of the co-sponsors in drafting this bill. We hope this legislation and today's hearing moves us further in the direction of much needed comprehensive immigration reform.