

## Sample Legislative Testimony: Statement of Support for Comprehensive Immigration

*This sample communication models how the recommended frames may be applied to formal documents such as legislative testimony. The statement opens with an appeal to Moral Argument, but without the use of rights-based language, in order to avoid triggering “Immigrants as Them” cultural models. After establishing Americans’ compassion and respect for all people, the argument moves to a Shared Prosperity narrative, applying the metaphor Immigration Sail to explain why our current immigration system is not working. Then it moves to a series of examples about how immigrants contribute, and how and why a system that allows them to contribute to their full potential is the best solution to the problem. Pragmatism couples with the discussion of solutions, particularly in talking about a pathway to citizenship as an appropriate solution for addressing the numbers of undocumented people in the United States. The statement closes with a final appeal to Shared Prosperity.*

Our message today is simple: all people are entitled to be treated with compassion and dignity. Our fellow Americans overwhelmingly take that moral obligation to heart. For the past three decades, the Coalition for Sensible Immigration Reform has worked tirelessly to ensure that we accord such treatment to all who come to the United States. Our organization strives to accomplish this goal by measuring the benefits of and advocating for comprehensive immigration reform.

Comprehensive immigration reform offers our country an opportunity to honor its highest ideals, ensuring respect and humanity for all while also minding our nation's best social and economic interests. Immigration reform will achieve both of these goals by creating a simplified, modern immigration system that contributes to, rather than stalls, our country's collective prosperity.

As the author George William Curtis, a contemporary of Abraham Lincoln, wrote, “It is not the boat, so much as the skillful sailing, that determines the prosperous voyage.”

Just as a boat's sails must be positioned to receive the wind, our immigration system must be positioned to catch the full benefit of the economic and social contributions immigrants make to the United States every year. Our current system does not work, nor does it reflect the compassion and dignity all people deserve. It is characterized by unnecessary complexities, backlogs, limited visas, and emphasis on enforcement over commonsense. It is positioned in a way that doesn't embrace the wind. As a result, our nation's progress is stalled, and families, our communities, and American workers and businesses are left drifting, awaiting a change of course that will set us in the right direction, on a path forward.

The United States needs immigration for its national wellbeing, and we need an immigration system that works optimally. Right now, for example, employer demand for labor exceeds the resources available in the American workforce, yet the annual number of visas available for highly skilled workers is depleted within a week of their issuance. That limits businesses' ability to grow and encourages companies headquartered here to move operations overseas in order to find the labor they need. Comprehensive visa reform will propel economic growth here in the United States.

Immigrants pay taxes—in 2010, people who were undocumented alone paid more than \$20 billion in local, state, personal income, property, and sales taxes. That is a substantial contribution to our infrastructure, national defense, and other government services. Creating mechanisms to give the undocumented legal status and a pathway to citizenship makes economic sense: it would increase their contributions even more, which would benefit all of us.

Our domestic workforce needs the additional skills that immigration brings. As Baby Boomers continue to retire over the next decade, the number of younger Americans entering the workforce will not be enough to fill the jobs that will become available. Immigrants and their children will be a crucial source of labor power, skills, and talents to fill U.S. employers' increasing labor needs.

Our shared prosperity is fed by the resources and labor of people who have arrived here, generation after generation, to become a part of the American story. An immigration system that fails to reap the full benefits of that power loses it—the wind that doesn't fill our sail will propel other nations', instead, to the detriment of our own progress.

Both documented and undocumented immigrants contribute to our social diversity and economic vitality. They open businesses and hire American workers, improving the financial stability of neighborhoods and communities. They spend money on American goods and services, which helps businesses to expand. Their customs and cultures mingle with those already here, enriching our society and our public discourse. Allowing better access to all of these resources by streamlining the process for new immigrants and by helping the undocumented to legalize their status is the most sensible approach to fixing our broken system. Instead of lowering the sails, we must unfurl them wider and maneuver them to best advantage.

Reforming the system will do this in many ways. Chief among them, it includes a pathway to earned citizenship for the undocumented. Removal or self-deportation of all those already here is impractical and costly. Providing a mechanism by which to offer security and a formal welcome to people already here—our friends, neighbors, family members, students, and coworkers—is a feasible, commonsense approach to decreasing the undocumented population, one that will increase our overall economic strength.

We should also reform the family and employment visa categories, and make overdue updates to the refugee and asylum program. Under the provisions of a comprehensive reform package, we can keep families together, protect those who face persecution in their home countries, better meet employer demand, and live up to our reputation as a compassionate nation.

The Coalition for Sensible Immigration Reform calls on policy makers to be faithful stewards of our country's progress, and to skillfully steer us in the direction of sustainable economic and social strength, by enacting reform without delay.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit this statement. We welcome any questions.