June 26, 2013

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Bar Association and its nearly 400,000 members nationwide, I write to urge you to vote in favor of passage of S. 744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act.

The ABA supports immigration reform that enhances our border and national security, realistically and humanely addresses the undocumented population and the need for immigrant labor, preserves family unity, and protects our tradition of due process and judicial review. S. 744, while not perfect, would implement steps toward accomplishing these goals.

Most importantly, S. 744 would implement a legalization program with a path to citizenship for the undocumented population currently residing in this country. This is a critically needed step to bring millions of people out of the shadows and provide them with an opportunity to become fully contributing members of our communities and our country. The bill also reforms the legal employment-based immigration process, providing additional avenues for those seeking to come to this country to fill necessary jobs, while protecting the rights of U.S. workers.

The bill contains provisions strongly supported by the ABA to enhance the fairness and efficiency of the immigration adjudication and detention systems. This includes provisions to: increase access to counsel for the most vulnerable noncitizens, such as children and the mentally disabled, in immigration proceedings; increase resources for the immigration court system; expand the federal Legal Orientation Program; increase the use of alternatives to detention; and enhance oversight of conditions in detention facilities.

S. 744 also incorporates the ABA-supported DREAM Act, which provides an opportunity for young people brought to this country through no fault of their own to earn legal status through higher education or service in the military. The bill contains provisions to enhance efforts to combat child trafficking and to improve the asylum process for those seeking refuge from persecution.

While the ABA, like many other organizations, has concerns about some aspects of the bill, we believe that it is, on balance, a positive and much-needed step toward improving our immigration system. We encourage you to vote in favor of S. 744 and to stand behind this bill as the Senate works with the House of Representatives to enact final legislation this year.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Susman
Director
Governmental Affairs Office