



As the American Jewish Community's international migration agency, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) was pleased to learn of the upcoming hearing, "Comprehensive Immigration Reform in 2009, Can We Do It and How." We strongly urge the committee to move forward with immigration legislation in 2009.

For many years, HIAS has advocated for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CIR) that would enhance our national security, fix our country's broken immigration system and fulfill our core humanitarian principles. Over the past several years we have worked with a growing coalition of Jewish and interfaith partners to encourage CIR legislation that addresses five interrelated problems: the approximately 12 million undocumented migrants currently residing in the United States, the inhumanely long delays in many family immigration categories, the violent and chaotic situation on U.S. borders that fails to provide safe and legal channels for immigrant workers, the lack of resources for immigrant integration programs, and the need for improved and effective border and interior enforcement programs. We believe that addressing these five issues as a package is the only way to fundamentally change our immigration system and to thereby fulfill our country's essential security needs.

In our view, one key element of a compromise bill must be a realistic plan to provide a path to citizenship for the current undocumented population. Undocumented migrants must be required to pay appropriate fines, wait in line behind other immigrants who have not violated immigration laws and undergo security screenings. While we don't condone illegal immigration, we strongly believe that creating a workable plan to provide the undocumented with an opportunity to become legal residents and ultimately citizens will have an extremely positive impact on security. With the vast majority of otherwise law-abiding undocumented immigrant workers brought into the legal immigration system, police, Department of Homeland Security and other enforcement resources will be able to target criminals, smugglers, and terrorists.

As work is done developing this crucial legislation, HIAS and the organized Jewish community remains ready to assist in the effort to create legislation that will provide our country with an immigration system that truly serves our core security, economic, social and humanitarian interests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gideon Aronoff", written in a cursive style.

Gideon Aronoff
President and CEO