



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

May 13, 2013

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

California is home to over 10 million immigrants, a greater number than the whole population of Georgia or Michigan. From the engineers and programmers working in Silicon Valley on H-1B visas, to the 2.9 million undocumented workers toiling mostly in the service and agricultural industries, the contributions of foreign-born Californians are fundamental to the state's economy.

Immigrants are not only numerous in California, they are also among our most creative and economically productive residents. According to the American Community Survey, 9.5% of California's foreign-born workers are small business owners, as opposed to only 8% of the native-born workforce. Only 9% of immigrants are employed by government, as opposed to 17.6% of the native-born.

The energy and initiative of immigrants constitute our state's greatest hope for a dynamic and prosperous future. The future of all Californians depends upon the success of immigrants, their employment, educational opportunities and integration into our economy and civil society. This is why we urgently need comprehensive immigration reform—it is the right thing to do.

Problems in the current immigration system affect every sector of our economy. Although the pathway to citizenship for the H-1B workers is expeditious, the cap on these visas is always insufficient, and the shortage of workers often stymies productivity at our high-tech companies. For undocumented workers in the service and agricultural industries, no useful legal path to residency and citizenship exists, yet the economy of California demands and depends upon their labor. I urge you to work with your fellow congressional representatives to fix this broken system and to do so swiftly.

In order to avoid dire consequences for our state, comprehensive immigration reform must occur this year and the resulting path to citizenship must be smooth and rapid. The sooner you allow

immigrants to become residents and citizens, the greater their contribution will be. As a state and nation, we are choosing to accept the undocumented workers who have entered our country illegally because neither industry nor the workers themselves were ever given any viable option to fill our labor demands legally.

Given the potential economic gains to our state and nation, we should not hold these workers in a state of purgatory for ten years. We need to provide a path to legalization that yields the greatest economic return to our state and nation and that means we need to provide it expeditiously. As we repair the situation of our current workforce, we also need to reform our system for future workforce needs. The new system must allow for more mobility while protecting guest workers from exploitation. We also need to increase the education and skills of all our workers, including the undocumented, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math. I urge you to incorporate the STEM amendment<sup>1</sup> for an education funding stream to assist our state's educational needs for filling our workforce needs domestically.

We recognize that our economic future depends on a viable plan and a strong legal framework for incorporating newcomers into American life. For these reasons I will make available all appropriate public resources within the State of California to assist in the process of repairing our immigration system.

To that end, I have asked my Secretary of Labor to identify all state special fund resources that can be used for the implementation of immigration reform, including fulfillment of employment requirements and assistance in learning English. In addition, given the important role of immigrant labor in our agricultural industry, my Secretary of Agriculture is convening a task force on agricultural labor needs.

If further assistance is needed from the State of California to accomplish this historic reform, I will do everything in my power to help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edmund G. Brown Jr." with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Edmund G. Brown Jr.

cc: California Congressional Delegation

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<sup>1</sup> Hatch-Klobuchar-Coons Amendment