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March 30, 2018

Commissioner Brecht Heuchan
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Via Email: Brecht.Heuchan@flcrc.gov

RE: Opposition to P29 – Employment Eligibility Verification

Dear Chairman Heuchan:

The overarching goals of mandating employment verification may be meritorious as it can ensure an eligible workforce and can provide workers and employers with a transparent process; however, CRC Proposal 29 is problematic and we urge your opposition.

Requiring adherence to federal law is redundant

Federal immigration law already requires employers to hire only individuals who have legal permission to work in the United States – either U.S. citizens or authorized foreign citizens. The proposal's statement that state employment practices shall not be contrary to federal law is unnecessary and does not seem to pertain to our state constitution. In fact, I am unaware of any other state constitution that incorporates provisions on federal immigration law enforcement.

P29 circumvents legislative process

The E-Verify system is currently a voluntary program for most employers. For many years, the Florida legislature has not considered bills to advance such a policy. It is notable that this proposal would force the legislature to establish a statewide employment verification system.

Passage of P29 would be harmful to workers

While P29 does not mandate the use of a specific employment verification system, the employment verification system administered by the government, E-Verify, is fraught with problems. Inaccuracies have caused otherwise-eligible workers, including citizens, to be disqualified from work. Additionally, employers' strategies to evade workplace verification programs further exploit the vulnerabilities of undocumented immigrant workers.

Employment verification would only be appropriate within reformed immigration system

The mandatory expansion of the system should only take place as part of a larger legislative effort on immigration reform that also includes: (1) complementary labor and employment protections to ensure that employment verification processes do not become a tool to undermine workplace rights or take advantage of workers' vulnerabilities; (2) expansion of legal avenues for low wage workers to enter the U.S. lawfully and work in humane conditions; (3) curbing employer efforts to misuse employment verification programs; and (4) improvement of the inaccuracies of the E-Verify system.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. We are pleased to address any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Wenski".

Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski, D.D.
FCCB President & Archbishop of Miami