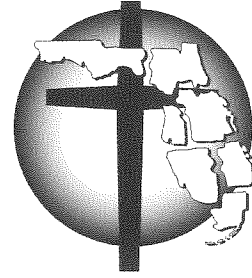


FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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MICHAEL B. SHEEDY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



January 23, 2024

The Hon. Blaise Ingoglia
310 Senate Office Building
404 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Re: Senate Immigration Legislation (SM 598, SB 1174 and SB 1324)

Dear Senator Ingoglia,

We recognize a country's right and responsibility to manage its borders in accordance with the common good, and Florida's bishops, along with their brother bishops across the United States, have been vocal proponents of immigration reform for many years. While we would characterize the situation in different terms, the FCCB shares deeply the concern for a federal remedy to the situation at the border and for federal reform our immigration system noted in SM 598.

Primarily, the legislature has focused its attention on negative aspects of the presence of immigrants: criminal behavior and participation (often as pawns) in activities of cartels and trafficking. There has been less focus on the positive aspects, such as contributions to the economy and workforce and the paying of taxes from which immigrants derive disproportionately less benefit. It must be noted that there is a significant body of research that shows immigrants are net contributors to local economies and communities.

This does not begin to contemplate the conditions from which they are fleeing and the rightful respect due to people seeking to improve their lives and those of their families. The system in place in our country does not ensure an orderly, reasonable process that protects national interests nor the dignity of those who are compelled to migrate.

You are the sponsor two substantive bills that affect migrants:

- Building on new laws enacted after last session, SB 1174 furthers restrictions on community identification cards to preclude local governments from not only issuing them or funding them, but from accepting them;
- SB 1324 establishes criminal penalties for unlicensed driving.

A large segment of Florida's resident population is precluded from obtaining a driver's license today, including those who are here without documentation. This has led to large numbers of drivers operating vehicles without insurance. When accidents inevitably occur, this is a problem for all parties and has prompted cases in which uninsured, unlicensed, undocumented drivers flee the scenes, whether they are culpable or not. Because driving is essential to work and life in Florida, adding more severe penalties would not likely curb this problem, but would instead exacerbate it. It would also add to the burden to the corrections system.

Since these bills would serve to make the lives of persons who have migrated to Florida outside our broken immigration system *and their communities* incrementally more difficult, we oppose them. We urge you and your colleagues to reconsider these proposals as we earnestly seek federal remedies for our immigration system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael B. Sheedy".

Michael B. Sheedy

cc: Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski, Archbishop of Miami and FCCB President
Tammy Fecci, DBE, Associate for Life and Dignity