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Statement on McCain-Kennedy Immigration Reform from FIRM, the Nation's Largest Coalition of Grassroots Organizations Working on Immigration Reform

“No longer can the federal government defend the status quo of an immigration system which exploits hard working immigrants while breaking their dreams and dignity every day. For far too long, immigrants have had to endure life in fear of death, deportation and discrimination. The time to fix these laws is now. America deserves an immigration system that reflects our values of fairness and equality.”

-Deepak Bhargava, Executive Director of the Center for Community Change, FIRM organizer

Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and John McCain (R-AZ) along with House Representatives Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), Jeff Flake (R-AZ) and Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) have introduced comprehensive immigration reform bills that respond to the current deplorable realities of our immigration system.

Unlike the Real ID act which equates immigrants to terrorists and fails to address legitimate immigration solutions; this bi-partisan effort recognizes the contributions immigrants make to our economy and to our society. For too long, Americans have benefited from the hard work of millions of law-abiding undocumented workers that have had to endure a life of fear of deportation and discrimination. The McCain-Kennedy legislation recognizes that our current immigration system is not working. Legal immigrant families have been waiting decades to be reunited with loved ones, while our economy demands hundreds of thousands of new workers each year. This legislation opens the door for further bi-partisan discussion on real comprehensive immigration reform that embraces our principles—to create a path to citizenship for millions of undocumented workers, ensure workers rights reunify families, restore civil liberties, protect refugees and asylees, and offer opportunities for safe future migration for millions of hardworking immigrants and their families.

Immigration reform is desperately needed. The McCain-Kennedy bill is an important first step in working towards a reasonable approach to immigration reform. FIRM coalition members look forward to reviewing this legislation. We stand ready to work with all Members of Congress to ensure that comprehensive immigration reform reflects FIRM's principles and the American principles of humanity, fairness, and equality.

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FIRM (Fair Immigration Reform Movement) is a coalition of grassroots community organizations nationwide, including statewide immigrant rights coalitions, organizing networks, faith-based groups, and low-income and other networks organized around ethnicity or national origin organizations, working on behalf of comprehensive immigration reform and immigrant rights. FIRM is convened by the Center for Community Change.