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Comments to the Alexandria City Council

October 13, 2007

Good morning.

I am here this morning to applaud the Mayor and City Council for unanimously passing a resolution articulating an intelligent, generous, and tolerant city policy with regard to immigrants living in our community who lack complete documentation.

First and foremost, no Alexandrian can dispute that it is not the legal responsibility, nor therefore should it be the fiscal responsibility, of our city to enforce federal immigration laws. If anything, the federal government should be required to provide additional funds to communities that bear the burden of its failure to pass a comprehensive immigration law that is compassionate, makes sense, and is fiscally viable for the businesses that rely upon both immigrant workers and consumers.

Second, for purely practical reasons, it would be counter-productive to threaten improperly documented immigrants who are otherwise good citizens as it would drive them underground making them more vulnerable to crime and less likely to report crimes they encounter.

Finally, as a community, we should always remember that America is a land of immigrants. For instance, my grandmother on my Dad's side was born in Kiev and as a child had to hide under the floorboards of her home to avoid pogroms – the Russian word for anti-Semitic mob attacks. She, like all of my grandparents who came to America at the beginning of the 20th Century, were fortunate to make their way across the world to find sanctuary here.

Tragically, the failure of the federal government to pass comprehensive immigration legislation has many unfortunate consequences. For instance, there are thousands of college kids striving to be productive citizens who were brought to our country as infants or young children and are in danger of being deported to nations they have little or no knowledge of and in which they would be strangers.

“The Dream Act,” a piece of federal legislation that has bi-partisan support from liberals like Senators Diane Feinstein and Richard Durbin and conservatives like Senators Orrin Hatch and Richard Lugar, would free kids trapped in this situation.

Many of those kids are struggling to retain their hope of a better day, a day when they can participate fully and legally in our society. Some have already lost hope and turned to gangs and crime, but many more are fighting to avoid that course. We in the community can keep these kids on track to be productive citizens by doing everything possible to help get “The Dream Act” passed. For more details on it, go to _____ or contact one of your federal legislators.

While our City Council can't write federal legislation to help solve the nation's problems, I am proud that you created and passed this resolution. Capturing the real American spirit, it reminds us that we have a common sense and caring government that works for all the people.

Thank you.

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* for identification purposes only