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June 26, 2013



**Support Hirono Amendment #1718 to S. 744:  
Provide Fairness to Women Immigrants**

Dear Senator:

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights urges you to support Hirono Amendment #1718 to S.744, co-sponsored by Senators Hirono, Murray, Murkowski, Baldwin, Boxer, Cantwell, Gillibrand, Klobuchar, Landrieu, Leahy, Mikulski, Murkowski, Shaheen, Stabenow, Warren, Menendez, and Schumer. Hirono Amendment #1718 goes to the heart of making the immigration system fair and inclusive by adding a new tier to the proposed merit-based system that is more inclusive of women's contributions.

We believe that the proposed merit-based system for employment green cards in S.744, as currently written, will significantly disadvantage women who want to come to this country. Awarding points primarily for education and employment experience fails to recognize the lack of opportunities and barriers that women face in accessing both education and employment in their home countries, barriers that are significantly worse for women than for men. This, in effect, would cement into U.S. immigration law, barriers and inequities that women face in their home countries and inadvertently restricts the opportunities available to women across the globe.

Currently, approximately 70% of immigrant women come to this country through the family-based system. Employment-based visas favor men over women by nearly a four-to-one margin because U.S. immigration law places a premium on male-dominated fields like engineering and computer science. However, women perform essential work as primary caregivers, domestic workers, in-home health care workers, and nurses. They also are often the backbone of families, taking care of those in an extended family who are ill or unable to care for themselves. Economically, women are increasingly the primary breadwinners in immigrant families, making it more likely for the family to open a small business or purchase a home. Women are also the primary drivers of immigrant integration for the entire family, encouraging others to learn English and integrate effectively into the community.

We believe that Hirono Amendment #1718 is essential to ensuring that we do not inadvertently cement discrimination against women into U.S. immigration law. The amendment would establish a Tier 3 merit-based point system that would provide a fair opportunity for women to compete for merit-based green cards. Complementary to the high-skilled Tier 1 and the lower-skilled Tier 2, the new Tier 3 would include professions commonly held by women so as not to limit women's opportunities for economic-focused immigration. It would provide 30,000 Tier 3 visas and would not reduce the visas available in the other merit-based Tiers.

America has always held out hope and opportunity to millions of women across the world. Women move here to make life better for themselves and their families. They move seeking freedom and opportunity often denied in other places. As Americans, we honor and celebrate our unique commitment to giving equal opportunities and protecting the civil and



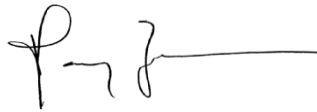
human rights of women and girls. Our immigration system should reflect that commitment and provide opportunities to everyone, including women.

Therefore, The Leadership Conference urges you to support Hirono Amendment #1718 and help ensure fairness for women in immigration reform. If you have any questions, please contact June Zeitlin, Senior Policy Counsel at 202-263-2852 or [zeitlin@civilrights.org](mailto:zeitlin@civilrights.org)

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson  
President and CEO



Nancy Zirkin  
Executive Vice President