



Pennsylvania Immigration & Citizenship Coalition

Advocating for immigrants, migrants and refugees

Member organizations include:

Aclamo Family Centers
ACLU of Pennsylvania
Africom
Alianzas de Phoenixville
Amnesty International (Philadelphia)
Aquinas Center
Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Office for
Pastoral Care for Refugees and Migrants
Asian Americans United
Asociación Puertorriquenos en Marcha
Bernardine Franciscan Sisters
Cambodian Association of Greater
Philadelphia
CASA
Casa de la Cultura
Casa San Jose
Catholic Charities of Harrisburg,
Immigration Legal Services
Ceiba
Center for the Empowerment of Women
Centro de Apoyo Comunitario de Upper
Darby
Church World Service – Lancaster
Community Legal Services
Equality Pennsylvania
Esperanza Immigration Legal Services
Free Migration Project
Friends of Farmworkers, Inc.
Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of
Commerce
Greater Reading Immigration Project
Grupo de Apoyo e Integración
Hispanoamericano
Health Federation of Philadelphia
HIAS Pennsylvania
Indochinese American Council
International Service Center
Japanese American Citizens League
Jobs with Justice (Philadelphia Area)
Keystone Progress
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania
Lutheran Children and Family Services
Make the Road Pennsylvania
Movement of Immigrant Leaders in PA
Nationalities Service Center
New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia
Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center
Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project
Philadelphia Corporation for Aging
PhilaPOSH
Pittsburgh Labor Council for Latin American
Advancement (LCLAA)
SEAMAAC
Sisters of Saint Joseph Welcome Center
Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania
Legislative Advocacy Network
VietLEAD
Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians

February 14, 2017

Pennsylvania Board of Bar Examiners
601 Commonwealth Ave., Suite 3600
P.O. Box 62535
Harrisburg, PA 17106-2535

Re: **Admission of Bar Applicants of All Immigration Statuses and
Application of Parthiv Patel**

Dear Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners:

I write on behalf of the Pennsylvania Immigrant and Citizenship Coalition (“PICC”), a diverse coalition of over 50 member organizations working collectively to promote immigrants’ full integration into society by advocating for welcoming public policies throughout the Commonwealth. Towards that goal, we urge you to consider admitting all qualified candidates to the Pennsylvania Bar regardless of immigration status.

Immigration status does not determine whether an applicant possesses the skills, competence, and moral character to serve as an advocate in the courts of Pennsylvania and to ethically represent the best interests of clients. Approximately 137,000 undocumented people live in Pennsylvania. They come from many different circumstances and arrive in the United States in many different ways. Being undocumented in the United States is not a crime, nor is it necessarily a permanent condition. Some undocumented immigrants have paths to legal status under current law, and many others would benefit from legislation that has been proposed in recent years. There is simply no reason for a categorical rule that treats all undocumented immigrants as lacking good character and fitness to practice law.

Lifting the categorical bar on undocumented attorneys will also help keep educated and skilled residents here—supporting the economic growth of our community. Further, such a policy could help close the access-to-justice gap in the Commonwealth by forging stronger connections with underserved immigrant and non-English speaking communities.

In our view, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania has full authority to regulate the practice of law in the Commonwealth and has delegated to the Board of Bar Examiners the responsibility for recommending rules pertaining to admission to the Bar. Thus, as I understand it, the Board has the power to adopt rules providing for the admission of qualified candidates to the bar regardless of immigration status. Accordingly, on behalf of PICC, I urge you to recommend that all undocumented bar

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applicants who satisfy the general qualifications for practice be admitted regardless of their immigration status.

Sincerely,

Sundrop Carter
Executive Director, PICC