June 5, 2007

Dear Senators:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to share with you our support of Amendment 1202, introduced by Senators Barack Obama (D-IL) and Robert Menendez (D-NJ), to S. 1348. This amendment would sunset the merit-based point system after five years. Underscoring our substantive concerns regarding the allocation of points within the system itself are more fundamental concerns brought on by such an extreme departure from the guiding principles of immigration law. An amendment that would implement this new system on a probationary basis, with the ability to dismantle it if unworkable, would provide a valuable safety net for the millions of immigrants waiting to reunite with their families.

On its face, the proposed point system disproportionately favors persons with higher education, experience in specialty occupations, and those with a mastery of the English language while diminishing the importance of family ties in the United States. Considering the high stakes at play in the national immigration debate, Congress can ill afford to sign off on an untested, unchecked merit-point system whose inadequacy would not only fail the immigrant community, but the American people as well.

This amendment draws attention to the fact that the merit-point system is more than just a straightforward ideological initiative; it is a radical departure from the cornerstone of immigration policy – family reunification. As such, we would be remiss not to proceed with caution and allow ourselves the opportunity to reevaluate the "merit" of the merit-point system via Congressional oversight.

We urge you to vote for this amendment and take a positive step in ensuring that the passage of comprehensive immigration reform protects and promotes the values that have made America a nation of immigrants.

Respectfully,

American Immigration Lawyers Association American Jewish Committee Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis Hispanic Ministry Leadership Team Asian American Justice Center Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum Asian Law Caucus (San Francisco, CA) CASA of Maryland Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles Democracia Ahora Dominican American National Roundtable Hmong National Development Idaho Community Action Network

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project Immigrant Legal Resource Center Jewish Council for Public Affairs Korean American Resource & Cultural Center (Chicago, IL) Korean Resource Center (Los Angeles, CA) Legal Momentum Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of Good Shepherd National Capital Immigration Coalition National Council of La Raza National Immigration Forum National Federation of Filipino American Associations Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law and Public Interest Northwest Federation of Community Organizations Organization for Justice & Equality People For the American Way Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada Service Employees International Union Southeast Asia Resource Action Center The Episcopal Church Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations United Dubuque Immigrant Alliance (Un Dia) United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society YKASEC Empowering the Korean American Community (Flushing, NY)