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Opening Statement of  
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Before the U.S. House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Immigration,  
Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law  
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*The Ethical Imperative for Reform of Our Immigration System*

Madame Chairwoman, distinguished members of Congress, thank you for inviting me to testify on this important issue regarding immigration. My name is Mat Staver and I am the Founder and Chairman of Liberty Counsel, a national public interest litigation, education and policy organization specializing in religious liberty, the sanctity of human life, and the family. Founded in 1989, Liberty Counsel has offices in Florida, Texas, Virginia, and Washington, DC, and has hundreds of affiliate attorneys throughout the country. I also serve as Dean and Professor of Law at Liberty University School of Law. The law school is one of ten colleges at Liberty University, which is the largest Christian university in the world with over 62,000 students from 74 countries between its residential and

online programs. I am also the Founder and Chairman of the Freedom Federation, which is a federation of some of the nation's largest independent multiracial, multiethnic, and multigenerational faith-based and policy organizations, representing about 40 million people.

The crisis the country is witnessing in Arizona over immigration is the result of a failed immigration policy at the federal level. The Arizona law is a symptom and a cry for help. However, the Constitution places the responsibility for immigration on the federal government, not on the states. Therefore, it is imperative that Congress act sooner than later to reform our immigration system. It is a matter of national security, domestic tranquility, and national identity. While upholding the rule of law, we must devise a system that is compassionate and just.

The immigration debate does not belong to any political party or to any socio-economic or ethnic group. I believe it is a moral issue. We should not allow partisan politics or the difficulty of crafting a solution deter us from the ultimate goal of fixing a broken system. We must secure our borders, enforce our laws, and we must deal with the undocumented immigrants currently living in the shadows.

### *Secure the Borders*

Our national security and domestic tranquility depend on secure borders. Secure borders are not closed borders. Violent criminals and drug traffickers take

advantage of open borders. Such criminals are a threat to everyone in every community.

*Enforce our Laws*

We must enforce our laws against those who knowingly employ undocumented immigrants, those who entice them to come here illegally, and those who take advantage of them once they cross the border.

*A Just Solution for Undocumented Immigrants Living in the United States*

Regarding the undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States, there are essentially three options: (1) amnesty, (2) deportation, or (3) earned legal status.

Amnesty flaunts the rule of law, rewards those who break the law, and is a disservice to those who are and have worked their way through the naturalization process. I am opposed to amnesty. It is not a fair or workable solution.

Mass deportation is impractical, immoral, and unjust. Many undocumented children came with their parents. Some children are naturalized citizens, having been born in America. Yet, their parents remain undocumented. Deportation in these circumstances would rip apart families, which no fair-minded American wants to do.

While undocumented felons or those who have committed violent crimes in America should be deported, we should invite the millions of undocumented and otherwise law-abiding persons living in our midst to come out of the shadows by providing them with an opportunity to gain legal status. The opportunity for earned legal status should involve a program of legalization, subject to appropriate penalties, waiting periods, background checks, evidence of moral character, a commitment to full participation in American society through an understanding of the English language, an understanding and affirmation of the rights and duties of citizens and the structure of the government, and the embrace of American values.

We must create a rational and just immigration policy which acknowledges that we are both a nation of immigrants and a nation of laws. A just policy would put otherwise law-abiding undocumented persons on one of three paths: one path leads to pursuing earned legal citizenship or legal residency; one leads to acquiring legal guest-worker status; and one leads back across the border, including a swift process for the deportation of undocumented felons or violent offenders.

A just immigration policy respects the traditions held by people of many backgrounds that make up America while recognizing the importance of a shared language, history and cultural values. Those who choose legal citizenship should

have the opportunity to fully participate in the American dream by removing any barrier to achieving those dreams.

Let me be clear – an earned pathway to legal status is not amnesty. I reject amnesty. I call upon those who label an earned pathway to legal status as amnesty to stop politicizing this debate needlessly and to honestly acknowledge the difference.

The time to forge a rational consensus is now. America is a country of immigrants, a melting pot of individuals from various ethnicities and cultures. It is this rich heritage of immigration on which this country was established, and, in accordance with a just immigration policy, this country will continue to thrive. America deserves a just immigration policy; one that begins with securing, not closing, our borders, one that enforces the laws, and one that offers the opportunity for earned legal status.

The overwhelming attraction of America is her freedom. As the world's standard-bearer for freedom, America's light shines as hope for the world. We must never quench the torch of liberty. We must always stand for the freedom that makes our shores the object of desire for people without hope.