

# *Welcoming* Massachusetts

## **Press Release**

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For more information contact:  
Ellen Gallagher, MIRA (617) 455-2856  
Edwin Argueta, Jobs with Justice (617) 335-9501

## **Immigrant Children Write to President-elect Obama and Governor Patrick this Holiday Season** *Welcoming Massachusetts sends Holiday Message of Hope*

Boston, MA – Immigrant children grant families today sent letters up Beacon Hill to President-elect Barack Obama and Governor Deval Patrick. Their wish list was short: that the state and the nation be welcoming and compassionate to them and their immigrant neighbors.

At the State House this afternoon, sons and daughters of immigrant families joined multiple immigrant rights organizations and their allies from the ‘Welcoming Massachusetts’ campaign for the reading of the letters. Welcoming Massachusetts is a state-wide campaign working to create a more humane, welcoming, and respecting environment for immigrants in the Commonwealth. To date, almost 6,000 individuals – and 85 organizations and 50 elected officials -- have signed the pledge declaring Massachusetts a state that values the dignity of all.

The text of the cards is as follows:

*Dear President-Elect Obama,*

*In this holiday season, we are filled with hope and joy at the prospect of your leadership in moving us toward a more welcoming nation. We are counting on you to recognize the urgent needs of immigrant families, in particular, the harsh enforcement policies that separate families and traumatize children. We urge you to make the enactment of humane and just immigration policies a top priority of your administration.*

*May you and your family enjoy a peaceful and fulfilling New Year.*

*Dear Governor Patrick,*

*In this holiday season, we are filled with hope and joy at the prospect of becoming a more just and welcoming state. We are counting on you to recognize the urgent needs of Massachusetts immigrants and to speak out against the harsh enforcement policies that separate families and traumatize children.*

*May you and your family enjoy a peaceful and fulfilling New Year.*

“While many children are writing wish lists to Santa Claus this month, dozens of children of immigrant families are asking for compassion from the Commonwealth and the nation this holiday season,” stated Ellen Gallagher of the MIRA Coalition.

Many advocates, not only in Massachusetts but across the country feel very hopeful with the outcome of the recent elections; the son of an immigrant has been elected as the 44<sup>th</sup> president of this great nation, and that brings the issue of immigration reform to a very personal level for President-Elect Obama. What is more important to consider, many believe, just like with many

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other issues aside from immigration reform, citizens had been conditioned to think, that change was not possible. The politics of fear and hate against immigrants were loudly defeated across the country during these past elections. The strategy of rejecting immigrants has been proven to be costly.

“As most of us prepare to celebrate another holiday season with our loved ones, let us not forget that there are still thousands of children separated from their parents as a result of our broken immigration system. It is our hope that as our message resonates with the residents of Massachusetts, their understanding about immigrants will be transformed; and that we shall move one step closer towards creating just and humane immigration policies both locally and nationally,” said Damaris Lopez from Agencia ALPHA.

“As an immigrant youth, am very happy to partake in this activity. We know that we can organize dialogues to speak about the positive contributions we are making in our communities. This campaign is giving us all, young and older folks the opportunity to work together and to strengthen positive development in our cities,” said Tony Martinez, a member of We Paint Our World, a youth program from Centro Presente.



Damaris Lopez, Director of Programs for Agencia Alpha proclaims that Massachusetts must become a more Welcoming state. She is accompanied by youth from Agencia Alpha, Centro Presente and the Welcome Project.



The youth deliver the letters to Governor Patrick's office this afternoon.

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