

Dear Governor McCrory,

As faith leaders from many different traditions, we write out of grave concern regarding House Bill 318, an anti-immigrant piece of legislation that recently passed the General Assembly. As people of faith, we look first to our common values rooted in our sacred texts that remind us to love our neighbor and welcome the sojourner among us. As Leviticus 19:34 (CE) reminds us:

“Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.”

We must recall that we are a country of immigrants and recognize the valuable contributions immigrants bring to our communities and economy. H.B. 318 denies local governments the right to determine how they practice community policing and protect immigrants who are victims or witnesses of crime. Common sense limits on local police collaboration with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are widely held as best practices in order to develop trust with the immigrant community and in turn improve public safety for all. We fear this type of legislation could create a hostile environment, leading to discrimination and racial profiling towards immigrants and people of color, regardless of their immigration or citizenship status.

We are pleased the General Assembly heard the voice of law enforcement officials speaking out in support of community identification programs and there was an amendment placed in S 119 that would allow police to accept consular or community identification. However, this amendment does not go far enough. All government officials should be allowed and encouraged to accept community or consular identification. The implications of prohibiting the use of such identification could be far reaching. Will libraries, schools or utility companies no longer be able to accept these forms of identification? We are concerned this could be a way to exclude and marginalize immigrants from our community.

This bill will also negatively impact low-income people struggling to find work, as it prohibits North Carolina from making exceptions to the length of time that an individual without children may receive supplemental nutrition assistance. This will directly cause an increase in food insecurity and hunger in North Carolina.

We urge you to think about the moral imperative to love our neighbor, welcome the immigrant and care for the poor and we ask you to veto H.B. 318.

Sincerely,

April Morgan

Blanca Nienhaus, LUPE - Latinos Unidos Promoviendo Esperanza

Ericka Henze-Pineda, Blessed Sacrament Church

Hans Linnartz, Raleigh Mennonite Church

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Father Andrew Santamauro, OFM Conv, Holy Cross Catholic Church
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Father Paul Lininger, OFM Conv., Blessed Sacrament Church
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Pastor Luz Ponce, Unidos Por Cristo
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Priest Tom Droppers, Holy Spirit
Reverend Donna Banks, St. Francis UMC
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