

Letters Opposing the SAFE Act

Leadership Conference of Women Religious, September 23, 2013

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, September 24, 2013

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, September 25, 2013

Disciples Justice Action Network (Disciples of Christ), September 26, 2013

Friends Committee for National Legislation, September 30, 2013

Mennonite Central Committee, October 1, 2013

NETWORK, October 2, 2013

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society, October 3, 2013

Franciscan Action Network, October 7, 2013

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, October 8, 2013

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach, October 9, 2013

Conference of Major Superiors of Men, October 10, 2013

The Episcopal Church, October 11, 2013

Church World Service, October 14, 2013

Jesuit Conference/Jesuit Refugee Service, October 15, 2013

American Baptist Church, October 16, 2013



Dear Member of Congress,

We write to express our concern about H.R. 2278, the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE Act). We are deeply troubled by provisions in the proposed legislation that would:

- Create new crimes for being present in the United States without lawful immigration status and for aiding a migrant or refugee who lacks immigration status;
- Expand the use of mandatory and indefinite immigration detention;
- Encourage state and local law enforcement officials' participation in immigration enforcement; and
- Decrease protections and immigration relief for certain migrant groups.

Catholic sisters began coming to these shores 286 years ago as immigrants to serve immigrant populations. To this day we continue to minister to these aspiring citizens in our schools and hospitals, and in our churches and social service agencies. We welcome them to our communities and our homes. We see the devastating effects of the brokenness of the current immigration system every day. We share the pain of mothers separated from their children and fathers who risk their lives for love of their families.

We find the SAFE Act objectionable on many levels. The bill's single-minded focus on immigration enforcement will increase detentions and deportations and encourage racial profiling and unconstitutional detentions without fixing any of the real problems of our broken immigration system.

We write today because we are particularly concerned about provisions in the SAFE Act that would effectively criminalize the ministry of our members. We take seriously our religious call to provide for the spiritual and humanitarian needs of all persons regardless of immigration status. The provisions of the SAFE Act run directly counter to the gospel values of generosity, hospitality, and welcome. We cannot contenance a law that would prohibit acts of kindness and mercy.

As women religious we take seriously the gospel call to welcome the stranger and care for those most in need. We are committed to the precepts of Catholic Social Teaching that remind us that the dignity of the person is at the core of our moral vision of society; that how we organize our society affects human dignity directly; and that any system that is deliberately cruel or inhumane must be changed.

Dear Representative:

The Sisters of Mercy strongly oppose the Strength and Fortify Enforcement Act (SAFE Act). We urge you to reject this legislation and any variation of it. This is not the correct response to the American public's demand for comprehensive immigration reform.

Today, as the Sisters of Mercy celebrate our 186th anniversary as a religious order; we reaffirm our mission of embodying Christ's merciful love of the most vulnerable. Our institutions and daily acts of service have brought us in contact with undocumented immigrants and their families. In our schools, we witness the full potential of a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrives (DACA) recipient who overcomes cultural and language barriers to become the top of her class. In our medical facilities, we care for the health and well-being of undocumented immigrant mothers as they prepare to give birth to the next generation of Americans. We, the Sisters of Mercy, know these people as our neighbors, as our friends and as our brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, we reject the SAFE Act that will accelerate the record mass deportations; obstruct the development of children; further jeopardize vulnerable populations; and waste tax dollars at the same time that the federal government is cutting funding to vital programs. **The SAFE Act is not only un-American, it is immoral and an assault to our Judaic-Christian principles.**

In fiscal year 2012, the United States deported 409,849 people and in fiscal year 2013 the numbers are projected to be even larger.¹ These record deportations are the result of overzealous enforcement protocols, such as 287(g), which deputizes state, local and tribal law enforcement officer to implement federal immigration law. Designed to apprehend criminals, this program has led to the arrest and deportation of mothers and fathers for minor traffic violations and has promoted racial profiling of minorities.² The SAFE Act would expand the 287(g) program and removes DHS's ability to revoke this authority from law enforcement agencies that have violated civil rights protocols.³ In addition to the threat to American civil liberties, the SAFE Act also threatens local, state and federal economies. In an era of austerity and sequester, this bill would dramatically increase the number of people detained for immigration offenses, which now costs the federal government \$5.05 million a day (\$2 billion a year).⁴ **In a time when the federal funds to Head Start are reduced by 5.27% (\$421 million this year alone), why would we spend billions more on detaining mothers and fathers instead of educating our future doctors and politicians?**⁵

Undocumented immigrants are often part of mix-status families. Of the 5.5 million children with an undocumented parent, roughly 4 million are U.S.-born citizens.⁶ The SAFE Act harms these children. The impact on a child's development when a parent is deported is "lasting economic turmoil, psychic scaring, and reduced school attainment, greater difficulty in maintaining relationships, social exclusion and lower earnings."⁷ For children rendered parentless by deportation, the consequences are even more extreme. Currently, 5,100 U.S. citizen children are in foster care programs because their parents were deported.⁸ Children in the foster care program have 46% chance of criminal activity by the age of 24, often associated with substance abuse.⁹ **Why would we implement a policy that would subject more innocent youth to a system that will leave them feeling abandoned and hopeless?**

For families that are still together, the SAFE Act would still irrevocably hamper a child's development. If the SAFE Act became law, undocumented parents would become less likely to take their child to a doctor, attend meetings with teachers or encourage their

¹ Removal Statistic, (2013). Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Retrieved from website: <http://www.ice.gov/removal-statistics/>

² Capps, R., Chisnti, M., Rodriguez, C., Rosenblum, M. (2011) Delegation and Divergence: A study of 287(g) State and Local Immigration Enforcement. Migration Policy Center: 2-3.

³ Summary of H.R. 2278 the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE) Act, (2013, June 20). National Immigration Law Center. Retrieved from website <http://www.nilc.org/safeactsummary.html>

⁴ National Immigration Forum, *The Math of Immigration Detention: Runaway Cost for Immigration Detention Do Not Add Up to Sensible Policies* (Washington DC: American Immigration Council, August 2013)

⁵ Stein, S. (2013, July 9). Sequestration Pushes Head Start Families to the Precipice. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from website: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/09/sequestration-head-start_n_3562607.html

⁶ Passel, J. and Cohn, D. (2009). An Estimated 4 Million Children with Unauthorized Parents were U.S.-Born Citizens. *Pew Research Hispanic Trend Project*. Retrieved from website: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/04/14/a-portrait-of-unauthorized-immigrants-in-the-united-states/>

⁷ Yoshikawa, H., Suarez-Orozco, C. (2012, August) Deporting Parents Hurts Kids. *New York Times*. Retrieved from website: www.nytimes.com/2012/04/21/opinion/deporting-parents-ruins-kids.html?_r=3

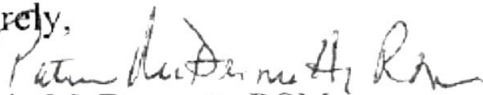
⁸ Dreby, J., (2012, August). How Today's Immigration Enforcement Policies Impact Children, Families and Communities. *Center for American Progress*.

⁹ Cusick, G. R., Havlicek, J. R. and Courtney, M. E. (2012), Risk for Arrest: The Role of Social Bonds in Protecting Foster Youth Making the Transition to Adulthood. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 82: 19-31.

children to participate in extra-curricular activities.¹⁰ Similar to the fate of their parents, the older siblings in families would also be endangered by this law. The SAFE Act would revoke any protections DACA recipients have received by enrolling in the government program.¹¹ Moreover, under this legislation, an undocumented youth could be deported on mere suspicion of gang activity. So a teen that lives in a bad neighborhood and attends a lower-economic school, would face the new risk to their health and well-being; for no criminal activities, they could be stripped of their family on nothing more than being “suspicious”.¹² **Why would the House pass anything that would cause so much pain to innocent children?**

The Sisters of Mercy are also troubled by the fact that the SAFE Act would strengthen the hands of perpetrators of physical and sexual abuse. If enacted, the law would undermine a victim’s ability to contact law enforcement or social service agencies, out of fear of deportation and possible separation for their children.¹³ Depending on the jurisdiction, the SAFE Act would enable state and local governments to mandate that their officers question victims and eye-witnesses on their immigration status.¹⁴ A study from the University of Chicago found that nationally, 44% of Latinos and 70% of undocumented Latinos are less likely to report being a victim of crime because they fear questioning about their legal status or the legal status of people in their community.¹⁵ **If the SAFE Act is made law, the Latino trust in law enforcement would deteriorate even further. Criminals will be free to prey on helpless victims and eye-witnesses will be intimidated to report vital information to authorities.** As the local and state police have become more entangled in immigration enforcement, many Latino have already reported that “criminals are moving into their neighborhoods, making them and their neighbors less safe, because criminals know residents are less likely to report them to police.”¹⁶ The SAFE Act would only perpetuate this problem.

The SAFE Act would not only criminalize undocumented immigrants but also humanitarians that offer support to vulnerable populations. If one of our sisters takes in a battered undocumented woman, she could face 10 to 20 years’ imprisonment under this proposed legislation.¹⁷ Some Good Samaritans will be deterred from offering support, thereby forcing many women back to their abuser. We on the other hand, would not reject a person in need and therefore pledge not to abide by such a horrendous law. **We implore you to stand with the Sisters of Mercy and oppose the SAFE Act and any variation of it. We need immigration reform but the SAFE Act is not the answer.**

Sincerely,

Patricia McDermott, RSM
President of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

¹⁰ Yoshikawa, H. (2011) Immigrants Raising Children: Undocumented Parents and their Young Children. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

¹¹ The Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act, H.R. 2278, 113th Cong. (2013). Representative Steve King’s Amendment

¹² The Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act, H.R. 2278, 113th Cong. (2013) Section 311

¹³ Hidalgo, R. (2013, September 12). House Staff Briefing: How Local Police Involvement in Immigrant Enforcement Makes Communities Unsafe. Cambio. US House of Representatives.

¹⁴ The Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act, H.R. 2278, 113th Cong. (2013) Section 102

¹⁵ Theodore, N. (2013, May). Insecure Communities: Latino Perception of Police Involvement in Immigration Enforcement. University of Chicago. Retrieved from website: www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci/documents/1213/Insecure_Communities_Report_Final.pdf.

¹⁶ Theodore, N. (2013, May). Insecure Communities: Latino Perception of Police Involvement in Immigration Enforcement. University of Chicago. Retrieved from website: www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci/documents/1213/Insecure_Communities_Report_Final.pdf.

¹⁷ The Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act, H.R. 2278, 113th Cong. (2013). Sec. 314



Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, as the national organization established by Lutheran churches in the United States to serve uprooted people, has [deep concerns](#) about the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement, or SAFE Act (H.R. 2278). In addition to expanding the use of immigration detention, encouraging state and local law enforcement officials' participation in immigration enforcement, and decreasing access to justice, protections, and immigration relief for certain migrants, we are concerned that the SAFE Act creates new crimes for being present in the United States without lawful immigration status or aiding a migrant or refugee who lacks immigration status. The SAFE Act is also fundamentally at odds with compassionate and fair immigration reform.

As people of faith, our sacred texts compel us to welcome the newcomer seeking safety, a new life, reunification with their families, and spiritual comfort. Hundreds of our colleagues from various faith traditions as well as [Refugee Council USA](#) have also strongly spoken out against the SAFE Act. In a recent [faith letter opposing the SAFE Act](#) sent to Speaker John Boehner and signed by over 250 faith leaders and organizations, we said,

We write today in specific objection to provisions in the SAFE Act that would criminalize religious leaders and houses of worship that provide humanitarian assistance to all persons regardless of immigration status as these provisions run directly counter to our beliefs in generosity, hospitality and welcome. The faith community is deeply troubled that Section 314 of the SAFE Act would make it a crime to transport undocumented immigrants and "encourage or induce a person to reside in the United States" if that person lacks immigration status. The penalties for engaging in any of these activities are steep, ranging from 3 to 20 years in prison.

People of faith commonly accept into their congregations and communities all newcomers and those in need without checking immigration paperwork. Providing transportation in particular would criminalize ordinary acts of kindness and would even criminalize members of mixed-status families traveling together.

The criminalization of compassion may prevent churches, individuals, attorneys, social service agencies, and refugee organizations from acting in good faith to care for our neighbors in need.

We urge you to oppose passage of the SAFE Act and any other legislation that obstructs the hospitality that is at the heart of our mission to love and welcome the newcomer.

We are hopeful you will work with your colleagues in passing legislation that provides a pathway to citizenship for the undocumented, ensures humane and just enforcement of immigration laws, unites migrant and refugee families, protects those fleeing persecution, and safeguards the rights of U.S. citizen and migrant workers.

In peace,

Brittney

Brittney Nystrom

Director for Advocacy | bnystrom@lirs.org | O: [202-626-7943](tel:202-626-7943) C: [202-810-3301](tel:202-810-3301)

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Advocacy Office: 122 C St. NW, Suite 125, Washington, D.C. 20001 | www.lirs.org



130 East Washington Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204



Dear Speaker Boehner,

September 26, 2013

As the Director of Disciples Home Missions in a denomination which strives to bring wholeness to a fragmented world, I write to express the consistently growing concern among our members and leaders about provisions introduced in H.R. 2278, the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE) Act. Shortly after the bill's introduction in the House of Representatives, one of our key Disciples of Christ border area pastors, Rev. Xose Escamilla, publicly expressed our community's conviction that "it is the time to reconcile border security with dignity of all human beings, with values that have a foundation on faith and family, and with values that prompt us to worship our Lord and welcome the stranger." Sadly, however, he recognized that the SAFE Act "simply fuels an inhumane stance...of inevitable deportation."

Since the bill's introduction, we have continued to study its provisions, and feel it to be at deep odds with our values for a number of reasons. Specifically, our Disciples Women network of hundreds of thousands across the U.S. has prioritized work to break the chains of those forced into servitude through human trafficking. However, the SAFE Act threatens to push immigrant survivors of domestic violence further into the shadows by limiting their access to resource networks and to police support; thereby potentially resulting in deportation proceedings without opportunity to benefit from VAWA or other already enacted protections.

Likewise, as a denomination committed to building justice and safety for our families and communities, we are disturbed by the SAFE Act's compulsion for law enforcement officers to engage in immigration enforcement activities or risk losing funding. We have heard clearly from police representatives around the U.S. their resistance to any Congressional action that requires state and local law enforcement to engage also in immigration enforcement. We are concerned such practices will greatly diminish the community trust and cooperation that are essential for the effective policing and reporting of crimes by immigrant communities that keep our neighborhoods secure.

Further, as a denomination that has historically supported fair wages and a path to citizenship for refugees, farm workers, and other immigrants for many decades, we intend to continue our hospitality roles of promoting civic engagement, offering English and vocational training, providing transportation, and inviting immigrants into the life of our congregations. Therefore, we are gravely concerned with provisions in the SAFE Act that would criminalize religious leaders and houses of worship as they provide humanitarian assistance to persons regardless of immigration status, and that would criminalize the transport (even for health and education services) of undocumented immigrants.

Speaker Boehner, we urge you to uphold our nation's compassion for the world's most vulnerable refugees, asylum seekers, and families fleeing persecution. We resist H.R. 2278's provision that could deport youth or others for whom DHS "has reason to believe" were in a gang, even without proof. We are additionally distressed with the ways H.R. 2278 could lead to incorrect identification of pro-democracy freedom fighters and victims of rape as "terrorists" even if they were forced to provide materials to a terrorist group.

With our Disciples heritage of resettling over 37,500 refugees and working with immigrant populations since the 1950's, we remain committed with you, Speaker Boehner, for visionary solutions to our broken immigration system. However, we respectfully request that you will strongly oppose the SAFE Act and other legislation that diminishes our nation's safety and the safety of vulnerable populations.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Ronald Degges, President, Disciples Home Missions



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FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

September 30, 2013

Members

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Representative:

I write on behalf of the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) to express deep concern about H.R. 2278, the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE) Act, and to urge you to reject the bill in its entirety.

As people of faith guided by the spiritual values of the Religious Society of Friends, FCNL's work on immigration is led by the call for right relationships among all people. We believe that respect for human and civil rights is essential to safeguarding the integrity of our society and the inherent dignity of all human beings. We further embrace the faith principle of welcoming the stranger, and believe the United States' historic tradition of welcoming immigrants should be restored.

It is upon this foundation that we fervently oppose the SAFE Act, a bill that would further increase the number of people detained, the length of sentences and even permit indefinite detention. The detention mandates in the bill would increase the separation of families and would require significant funding at a time when the nation faces deep spending cuts.

The SAFE Act would permit detention of an immigrant without the right to trial—a gross violation of human rights under any circumstance. By criminalizing a wider variety of offenses and prescribing mandatory sentences, the Act would further increase detention while reducing immigrants' access to legal counsel. More detention sentences, and for longer periods, further disrupts family unity and causes unnecessary suffering for thousands of people, the majority of whom are working and contributing to our society and economy.

While increased detention is among the most expensive responses to our broken immigration system, it is not a solution. In 2011 the number of detentions reached an all-time high of 429,247, and 52 percent of those who were detained and deported had no criminal history.¹⁸ These increases are fiscally irresponsible. The Department of Homeland Security received over two billion dollars for detention and removal operations for fiscal year 2013.¹⁹ The cost of incarceration burdens taxpayers while increasing the profits of private prisons.

For the past 10 years, the U.S. has implemented stronger enforcement measures to try and quell unauthorized immigration, yet our immigration system remains deeply flawed. Now is the time to implement bipartisan immigration

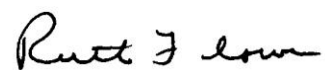
¹⁸ Simanski, John and Lesley M. Sapp. "Immigration Enforcement Actions: 2011." *DHS Office of Immigration Statistics*. Retrieved from website: http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/enforcement_ar_2011.pdf

¹⁹ Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Bill Committee Report, p. 51. Retrieved from website: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CRPT-112hrpt492/pdf/CRPT-112hrpt492.pdf>

reform that addresses the system's real problems. We need legislation that would reunite families, protect the rights of all workers and provide an opportunity for undocumented immigrants to earn their legal status.

The SAFE Act is not part of fixing our broken immigration system. We urge you to oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth Flower". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ruth Flower

Legislative Director

Relief, development and peace in the name of Christ

Dear Member of Congress,

We write to express our concerns with H.R. 2278, the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE) Act. The SAFE Act's single-minded focus on immigration enforcement will criminalize church members who reach out to immigrants, encourage racial profiling and expand detention and deportation without due process, while failing to fix any of the real problems with our broken immigration system.

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The SAFE Act would:

mailbox@mcc.org
mcc.org

- **Criminalize church members for simple acts of kindness.** The SAFE Act would make it a crime to transport undocumented immigrants or in any way "encourage or induce a person to reside in the United States" if that person lacks immigration status. The penalties for engaging in any of these activities are steep, ranging from 3 to 20 years in prison. Churches commonly accept into their congregations all newcomers and provide assistance to those in need without checking immigration paperwork. The bill would criminalize ordinary acts of kindness, such as providing transportation, and would even criminalize members of mixed status families traveling together.
- **Expand the use of mandatory and indefinite detention.** The punitive measures proposed in the SAFE Act are fundamentally inconsistent with providing a path to legalization for undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S. The SAFE Act would make it a crime to overstay a visa by even a single day, expand the use of mandatory and indefinite detention, and erode what little due process exists for those facing deportation. The U.S. currently spends over \$5 million per day detaining immigrants. Alternatives to detention – which are both more cost effective and more humane – should be used in cases where the individual poses no threat to his or her community.
- **Mandate state and local law enforcement to enforce federal immigration laws.** Modeled after Arizona's SB1070 law, the SAFE Act would encourage racial profiling, mandating that local law enforcement investigate, identify, apprehend, arrest and detain everyone who they *suspect* to be undocumented or deportable. The bill would increase and mandate programs that force local police to serve as immigration officials, and would deny states and localities the ability to adjust the implementation of these programs.
- **Roll back protections for DREAMers.** In 2012, after several failed attempts to pass the DREAM Act, immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as young children, without documentation, were offered an opportunity to be safe from deportation. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program allows these young immigrants to attend college, work in their chosen fields, and contribute more fully to their communities. The SAFE Act would eliminate this program, as well as other forms of temporary relief for those with family members in the U.S.

The Bible calls us to welcome all newcomers, whether they are fleeing conflict, attempting to escape poverty, or seeking reunification with family members. We urge you to oppose passage of the SAFE Act and any other legislation that would criminalize the love and hospitality we are called by Christ to show the stranger among us. **We urge you, instead, to work for meaningful, humane immigration reform that creates a pathway to citizenship, reunites families, and does not further militarize our borders.**

Sincerely,



J Ron Byler
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Executive Director



Dear Representative,

NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby vehemently opposes the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE) Act (H.R. 2278). Our organization is dedicated to commonsense, comprehensive immigration reform that must include a pathway to citizenship and protect family unity. The SAFE Act does not fulfill these fundamental requirements that the faith community sees as essential to fixing our broken immigration system.

The SAFE Act violates an essential element of Catholic Social Teaching: respect for the dignity of the human person. The SAFE Act will increase the already record rates of mass deportations, endanger already vulnerable populations, and subject them to increased racial profiling. It will also directly harm children's development, decrease public safety, and waste taxpayer money. **Not only is the SAFE Act an unpatriotic and inhumane response to the need to "fix" our immigration system, it is an expensive proposal at a time when needed programs are being cut.**

NETWORK was founded by 47 Catholic sisters over 40 years ago, and we have members in all 50 states. Throughout our history, humane immigration policies have remained a crucial issue for our organization. From May 28 to June 18, 2013, "NETWORK's Nuns on the Bus: A Drive for Faith, Family, and Citizenship" traveled 6,800 miles through 15 states with one message: "comprehensive immigration reform now." We met Catholic Sisters and their communities throughout our journey who know that immigrants are valuable, contributing members of our society; it is time that Congress recognizes that as well.

Along the road, we met thousands who would be greatly impacted by negative bills such as the SAFE Act. The SAFE Act will criminalize undocumented immigrants as well as humanitarians whose mission is to provide support to vulnerable populations. The penalties are severe—3 to 20 years in prison. **The SAFE Act is a criminalization of compassion.** We also gravely object to the separation of families—parents, children, siblings and other guardians—that would increase if the SAFE Act were implemented. We heard many stories along our Nuns on the Bus journey where fifteen-year-olds would be left to care for their younger siblings. No child should have to take on that role and be separated from their parents.

We invite you to learn more about the SAFE Act at a congressional briefing entitled "Criminalizing Compassion: What the SAFE Act and Arizona SB 1070 Get Wrong" on Wednesday, October 9 at 3:00 p.m. in 421 Cannon House Office Building.

NETWORK opposes the SAFE Act, and we urge Congress to do so as well. It is our hope that members of Congress work together to create real solutions to our broken immigration system that include providing a pathway to citizenship and keeps families together.

Sincerely,

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS

Executive Director

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby



General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church

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Dear Representative

I write to you in adamant opposition to the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement, or SAFE Act (H.R. 2278). I am joined by numerous other faith organizations in our opposition to this bill. Genuine reform of the broken immigration system cannot be achieved with the SAFE Act. This is a non-starter and represents a significant step backwards in the struggle for just and humane immigration reform.

The SAFE Act is flawed in many ways. To cite a few examples, the SAFE Act:

- would create new crimes for being present in the United States without lawful immigration status or aiding a migrant or refugee who lacks immigration status,
- expands the use of mandatory and indefinite immigration detention,
- grants state and local law enforcement officials the authority to create and enforce their own immigration laws, which would lead to more racial profiling, unlawful detention and the further erosion of trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement, and
- decreases protections and immigration relief for certain migrant groups.

Because of these and other flaws, we consider the act a non-starter for reform efforts. We will never achieve a legal, orderly effective immigration system until we stop such punitive and harsh efforts that the SAFE Act entails.

The punitive approach found in the SAFE Act is inconsistent with the precepts of our faith as Christians and betrays the values that cause people to migrate to the United States in the first place. For instance, Section 314 of the SAFE Act would make it a crime to transport undocumented immigrants and “encourage or induce a person to reside in the United States” if that person lacks immigration status. The penalties for engaging in any of these activities are steep, ranging from 3 to 20 years in prison. This provision would place thousands of United Methodists in prison for following the pervasive biblical command of welcoming the sojourner to our land.

It is time for both the House and the Senate to examine what will truly reform the immigration system. United Methodists have long advocated for just and humane immigration reform that includes:

- full citizenship for undocumented immigrants,
- reunification of families separated by migration,
- securing the civil and human rights of all migrants including work protections and due process in the courts,
- the complete halt of all deportations until just and humane immigration reform is passed, and
- effectively addressing the root causes of migration.

United Methodists by the thousands have been mobilizing for immigration reform that includes the values listed above. They will not stop until such legislation is passed, no matter how long it takes. We count on you to do the right thing: to vote no on the SAFE Act and to pass legislation in this work period that includes these values.

Sincerely,

Jim Winkler
General Secretary



Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

3025 4th Street, N.E. • Washington, DC 20017 • 202-527-7575 • 1-888-364-3388 (toll free) • 202-527-7576 (fax)

October 7, 2013

Dear Speaker Boehner and Members of Congress,

Franciscan Action Network, a national organization which provides a collective Franciscan voice addressing U.S. public policy, has serious concerns about H.R. 2278, the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act, or SAFE Act. Who is really more “safe” if this bill is enacted? Not immigrants for whom the threat of detentions and deportations will intensify and who are likely to suffer from racial profiling. Not those in our places of worship and social service centers who will face criminal charges for assisting all people in humanitarian and spiritual need, including immigrants without legal status. Not even the American public who would be ill served by the enforcement of unconstitutional detentions which are not in accord with American values of compassion and fairness. Moreover, the SAFE Act would not fix any of the real problems of our broken immigration system whose failure is acknowledged by both political parties and both chambers of Congress.

As followers of Jesus Christ and St. Francis of Assisi, we promote the dignity of every human person and work to assure that those with whom we minister are treated with respect, fairness and compassion. Many of our members care for the humanitarian, educational, health and spiritual needs of people most in need. They know first-hand the heart-breaking stories of families who have been separated, of those who came to this country illegally because there were no legal ways for them to come in order to find work to provide for their children. So many of these immigrants from different countries have made a good life for their families, are involved in civic and religious life where they reside, and desire to emerge from the shadows and become U.S. citizens with the privileges and responsibilities that come with citizenship.

St. Francis of Assisi greeted all with the words, “Peace and all good.” We Franciscan women and men wish you this blessing as we pray that you will work to enact legislation that provides an earned, accessible path to citizenship, promotes family unity, and ensures genuine “safety” for immigrants, for those who assist them, and , ultimately, for all who live in our beloved country.

Peace and all good,

Margaret Magee, OSF

President



Sisters of the Good Shepherd

The National
Advocacy Center

Dear Representative:

The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd wishes to join with the Sisters of Mercy in strongly opposing the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act (SAFE Act). Since our Congregation was founded in France in 1835, the Congregation has dedicated itself to serving poor and marginal women and families. The work of the Sisters in 70 countries in 5 continents, 22 States, and 2 U.S. Territories is based on the belief in the unique value of the human person, regardless of age, sex, culture or religion.

We believe that each person has the right to a basic quality of life; adequate income, shelter, opportunities for education and employment, quality health care, and nutrition. As Catholics, our faith requires that everyone should be treated with the utmost dignity and respect.

Based upon that belief system, the Congregation urges you to reject the SAFE Act and any variation of it. We do not ask for a simple religious exemption to the SAFE Act but rejection of the entire Act.

The SAFE Act would accelerate the record mass deportations; obstruct the development of children; further jeopardize vulnerable populations; and waste tax dollars at the same time that the federal government is cutting funding to vital programs. The SAFE Act is not only un-American, it is immoral and an assault to our Judaic-Christian principles.

Undocumented immigrants are often part of mix-status families. Of the 5.5 million children with an undocumented parent, roughly 4 million are U.S.-born citizens. The SAFE Act harms these children. The impact on a child's development when a parent is deported is "lasting economic turmoil, psychic scaring, and reduced school attainment, greater difficulty in maintaining relationships, social exclusion and lower earnings.

For children rendered parentless by deportation, the consequences are even more extreme. Currently, 5,100 U.S. citizen children are in foster care programs because their parents were deported. Children in the foster care program have 46% chance of criminal activity by the age of 24, often associated with substance abuse. Why would we implement a policy that would subject more innocent youth to a system that will leave them feeling abandoned and hopeless?

In addition, the SAFE Act would criminalize undocumented immigrants but also humanitarians who offer support to vulnerable populations. If one of our sisters, or any person of good will, takes in a battered undocumented woman, she could face 10 to 20 years' imprisonment under this proposed legislation. Some people of goodwill will be deterred from offering support, thereby forcing many women back to their abuser.

Please oppose the SAFE Act. The SAFE Act has no redeeming features and simply makes a bad problem worse.

Sincerely,

Ellen Kelly
Ellen Kelly

Mary Catherine Massei
Mary Catherine Massei

Liliane Sauvette
Liliane Sauvette

Provincials: New York and Mid-North America



COLUMBAN CENTER FOR ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH

October 9th, 2013

Dear Speaker Boehner and Members of Congress:

I write from the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach, a ministry of the Missionary Society of St. Columban. We are an international Catholic organization of priests and lay missionaries who work with and serve those who are economically poor and marginalized. We are currently active in 15 countries, including the United States.

Columban Fathers and lay missionaries work with immigrant communities in most of the states we serve. They serve in parishes where immigrants worship, they provide mass and counseling in detention centers and local jails, and they walk with immigrants to ensure they have their basic needs met or legal assistance. Many immigrants become longtime parishioners, friends, and family. We serve immigrants from Fiji, Korea, the Philippines, Latin America, and other nations.

Due to the many years of service to our immigrant brothers and sisters, we are strongly opposed to the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement, or S.A.F.E. Act (H.R. 2278).

We hope you will consider the concerns in our letter and join us today for a congressional briefing we are co-sponsoring in 421 Cannon from 3-4pm entitled, "Criminalizing Compassion: What Arizona SB 1070 and the Safe Act Get Wrong."

As a Catholic missionary society we are concerned that:

1. **The S.A.F.E. Act would create a deeper sense of fear and further criminalize immigrants.** We have already witnessed some of the repercussions of the SAFE Act in policies such as the Arizona SB 1070 and the federal 287(g) agreements. These policies have increased racial profiling and are a poor use of U.S. taxpayer dollars. The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) found that nationally about half of the immigrants held under the 287(g) agreements committed minor misdemeanors or traffic violations. In 2010, MPI documented a total of 39,772 immigrants detained under 287(g). One example from the MPI report from Georgia illustrates the potential economic costs of detaining thousands of immigrants. Immigrants were detained an average of 81 days at roughly \$60 per day. This kind of public investment does not serve the common good and in fact harms families and communities.
2. **The S.A.F.E. Act would harm the people and organizations who accompany migrants.** As people of faith, we are called to welcome the stranger among us and to care for the least of these. For more than twenty years Columbans have served migrants in need. Preventing organizations from assisting the "least of these" is both in opposition to Catholic social teaching and inhumane. We seek a compassionate approach to immigration that puts the needs of the most vulnerable at the heart of reform and that is in line with our values as people of faith and as a nation.
3. **We are deeply concerned about the large population and the treatment of immigrants already held in detention centers.** A record 429,000 immigrants were detained in 2011. There are numerous cases of immigrants who did not receive access to proper legal counsel or due process. Immigrants sometimes lack health and other basic needs. Some women experience sexual violence, while other

immigrants are held in solitary confinement. These practices deny the human dignity and worth of immigrants and do not uphold our call to care for the least of these among us.

4. **We recognize the great traumas that many immigrants have experienced in their journey to the United States** in search of a safer and more stable life. Many immigrants have fled violence in their home country from gang members, common criminals, police, and military officers. Some have lost loved ones or have had their own lives threatened. Many women come with stories of sexual abuse or of having been trafficked many times before arriving in the U.S. Women and men have been victims of crimes on their journey. Once here, many are still victims of wage theft and abuse by employers and others who take advantage of their undocumented status.

We urge you to oppose the S.A.F.E. Act. Rather than contribute additional fear and trauma to the lives of our immigrant brothers and sisters, we urge you to seek compassionate immigration reform. These policies should seek a path to citizenship, a way for families to be reunited, a solution to address root causes of migration, and the restoration of due process protections.

We have a moral obligation to provide hospitality, to care for God's most marginalized, and to welcome the immigrant into the fabric of our nation- a fabric already woven together with many cultures, languages, and faith traditions. We will be a more abundant country by recognizing the contributions and dignity of all God's people in the United States.

Sincerely,

Scott Wright
Director

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach



Conference of Major Superiors of Men

October 10, 2013

Dear Member of Congress,

As the national conference serving the leaders of all the Catholic men's religious orders in the U.S., we write to express our concern about H.R. 2278, the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE Act). We are deeply troubled by provisions in the proposed legislation that would:

- Create new crimes for being present in the United States without lawful immigration status and for aiding a migrant or refugee who lacks immigration status
- Expand the use of mandatory and indefinite immigration detention
- Encourage state and local law enforcement officials' participation in immigration enforcement
- Decrease protections and immigration relief for certain migrant groups

Catholic brothers and priests began coming to these shores over 200 years ago as immigrants in many ways to serve immigrant populations. To this day we continue to minister to these aspiring citizens in our schools and hospitals, and in our churches and social service agencies. We welcome them to our communities and our homes. We see the devastating effects of the brokenness of the current immigration system every day. We share the pain of mothers and fathers separated from their children and those who risk their lives for love of their families.

We find the SAFE Act objectionable on many levels. The bill's single-minded focus on immigration enforcement will increase detentions and deportations and encourage racial profiling and unconstitutional detentions without fixing any of the real problems of our broken immigration system.

We write today because we are particularly concerned about provisions in the SAFE Act that would effectively criminalize the ministry of our members. We take seriously our religious call to provide for the spiritual and humanitarian needs of all persons regardless of immigration status. The provisions of the SAFE Act run directly counter to the gospel values of generosity, hospitality, welcome, and solidarity with the poor and marginalized. We cannot contenance a law that would prohibit acts of kindness and mercy.

As men religious we take seriously the Gospel call to welcome the stranger and care for those most in need. We are committed to the precepts of Catholic Social Teaching that remind us that the dignity of the person is at the core of our moral vision of society; that how we organize our society affects human dignity directly; and that any system that is deliberately cruel or inhumane must be changed. Dignity is upheld when we treat each person as a gift, particularly as a gift from God out of love and for love. When we divide families, which are a key organ of love, ignore the gifts that immigrants are to our society, and become possessive about our land and resources, then we are not acting in accord with human dignity.

Thus, we urge you to oppose passage of the SAFE Act and any other legislation that would criminalize the compassion and hospitality that lie at the heart of our mission and the core of our national culture.

We promise you our prayers and hope that you will work with your colleagues to enact legislation that places greater emphasis on compassion, unity, and God's love for all seeking rest and opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Very Rev. John Edmunds, S.T." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Very Rev. John Edmunds, ST
President
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
www.cmsm.org



Episcopal Public Policy Network Alert: Compassion should never be criminalized- Oppose the SAFE Act

Compassion should never be criminalized, but there is an immigration bill in the House of Representatives that would do just that, placing immigrant and non-immigrant members of our communities at risk.

If enacted, the SAFE Act would criminalize religious leaders, lay leaders, and volunteers in faith communities across the country for providing aid and fellowship to immigrants. Regardless of an individual's immigration status, Episcopalians proudly accept all newcomers and those in need into our congregations and communities. However, under the SAFE Act, acts of kindness and hospitality such as providing transportation to a church or school event or serving someone at a soup kitchen would be criminalized, wrongly placing members of our congregations and mixed-status families in danger of facing sentences that range from 3 to 20 years in prison.

The SAFE Act also poses great dangers to asylum seekers and refugees by expanding laws that falsely label victims of kidnapping, extortion, and rape as "terrorists" if they were coerced to provide goods or services to a terrorist group. The bill would create new grounds of inadmissibility and deportability for persons whom Department of Homeland Security "has reason to believe" have been members of a gang, even if they were not actually gang members. It would expand the immigration detention system that holds many torture survivors and asylum seekers by mandating detention even when unnecessary, and it would authorize indefinite detention for persons who have been ordered removed. Additionally, the SAFE Act would:

- Allow expansion of the 287(g) program
- Authorize all states and localities to create their own immigration enforcement laws, allowing laws like Arizona's SB1070 to proliferate across the country
- Subject certain migrants who cannot be returned to their countries of origin, including stateless persons and asylum seekers, to indefinite detention
- Expand both the categories of migrants who are mandatorily detained and the number of immigration detention facilities nationally

These concerns, rooted extensively in Episcopal Church General Convention and Executive Council resolutions (see below) are why we need to take action **TODAY** to oppose the SAFE Act. Our broken immigration system needs a solution that protects our borders while upholding our tradition as a nation that welcomes the integrity, ingenuity, and contributions of immigrants. Instead, the SAFE Act expands, rather than reforms a flawed "enforcement only" strategy, endangering immigrants and the communities that welcome them. Write to your Representative to day and ask them to **[OPPOSE the SAFE Act.](#)**

Additional Resources:

- Decry the use of racial profiling as a reason to question an individual's immigration status and call for the immediate end to the Secure Communities program which leads to lengthy detention of immigrants who have no serious charges against them and discourages victims of crimes, such as domestic abuse, from reporting those crimes (GC '12)
- Urge the US government to terminate any program that allows or funds local law enforcement agencies' enforcement of immigration law, thereby allowing immigrant victims of crime to report it without fear of deportation. (GC '09)
- Urge the US government to consider alternatives to a costly prison-like detention system for immigrants. (GC '09)

- Declare strong opposition to any legislation that would make it unlawful for faith based or humanitarian organizations to act to relieve the suffering of undocumented immigrants in response to the Gospel mandate to serve the least among us and our Baptismal covenant to seek and serve Christ in all persons and calls upon the people of the Episcopal Church to act on their baptismal covenant without regard to such unjust legislation. **(EC 3/06)**
- The Episcopal Church joined our partners in [Refugee Council USA](#) and over [250 national and state faith groups](#) in two letters to Congress opposing the SAFE Act
- Want to share information with your community about the SAFE Act? Use this informative info graphic from [Cambio](#)
- Check out the EPPN website! <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/eppn>



Dear Members of the U.S. House of Representatives,

I write you today to strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 2278, the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act or so-called "SAFE" Act. This bill calls for policies that would take our nation backwards by encouraging racial profiling, jeopardizing community safety, criminalizing compassion, and denying protection to vulnerable persons fleeing persecution.

The bill's provisions that mimic Arizona's S.B. 1070 would mandate that police stop and ask the immigration status of anyone they suspect to be undocumented. This has shown to lead to racial profiling, stigmatize immigrant communities, and inappropriately redirect limited police resources. Similar policies, such as the 287(g) and "Secure Communities" programs have proven to place all community members at risk, as many do not report crimes they witness or fall victim to, fearing the deportation of themselves or a loved one. When the trust is broken between communities and police, criminals continue to prey without detection.

CWS is also concerned about the provision that would criminalize faith communities who provide needed assistance regardless of an individual's immigration status, as well as volunteers, community members, friends and even family members who "transport, move, harbor or shield" a refugee, asylum seeker or anyone whose immigration status has lapsed. We are called by our faith to treat the immigrant as the citizen among us, and the SAFE Act would interfere with carrying out our mission to welcome the stranger.

H.R. 2278 would also broaden the problematic "material support" bars that have already unjustly denied protection to Burmese pro-democracy freedom fighters, parents forced to pay ransoms for their children's freedom, and women forced to cook and clean for their captors, incorrectly labeling them as supporters of terrorism. It would also require the Department of Homeland Security to add additional detention beds, increase mandatory detention and allow for indefinite detention, which would negatively impact vulnerable populations, including asylum seekers.

The SAFE Act is not the reform we need. Our country needs you to work toward real solutions, not punitive, anti-immigrant bills such as the SAFE Act. People of faith and good conscience have made their voices heard against this bill. In just this past month, more than 300 clergy and lay leaders traveled to Washington, DC, despite the government shutdown, to advocate for immigration reform, and 8,000 people of faith across this nation in a 40-day rolling fast taking place now through October 18th.

We all call for members of Congress to reject this legislation and instead work toward immigration reform that reunites families, protects vulnerable communities, and creates a path to citizenship for our undocumented community members.

Sincerely,

Erol Kekic

Director, Immigration and Refugee Program

Church World Service

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Participating Denominations and Communion: African Methodist Episcopal Church African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Alliance of Baptists American Baptist Churches U.S.A. Apostolic Catholic Church

American Church of America (including Diocese of California) Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Christian Methodist Episcopal Church Church of the Brethren Community of Christ The Coptic Orthodox Church in North America The Episcopal Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Friends United Meeting Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Hungarian Reformed Church in America International Council of Community Churches Korean Presbyterian Church in America
Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church Mar Thoma Church Moravian Church in America National Baptist Convention of America National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. National Missionary Baptist Convention of America Orthodox Church in America
Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the U.S.A. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Polish National Catholic Church of America Presbyterian Church (USA) Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.
Reformed Church in America Serbian Orthodox Church in the U.S.A. and Canada The Swedenborgian Church Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch Ukrainian Orthodox Church in America United Church of Christ The United Methodist Church



Dear Members of the U.S. House of Representatives,

I write you today to strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 2278, the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act or SAFE Act. This bill contains provisions that would criminalize compassion, threaten community safety, and deny critical protection to vulnerable people fleeing persecution.

In particular, we are concerned that:

- **Title I** would expand the role of state and local law enforcement agencies in enforcing federal immigration law. Granting states and localities full authority to create, implement, and enforce immigration laws without federal oversight could lead to racial profiling and discrimination. Those who “look undocumented,” including refugees and asylees, would be subject to law enforcement stops, arrests, and detention. This approach decreases public safety by jeopardizing the trust between law enforcement and immigrant and refugee communities.
- **Section 107** requires DHS to add additional detention facilities to its already expansive network. This expansion could increase the number of asylum seekers behind bars and families who are separated. It also signals a move backward to increased detention with high human and financial costs, rather than toward more humane and cost-effective alternatives.
- **Sections 202 and 203** worsens an existing problem in which an overly broad definition of terrorist activity causes people who present no security risk to be denied life-saving protection because they have been mislabeled as “terrorists” under the expansive law. This includes individuals who were forced to provide money or services to armed groups or terrorists or who supported freedom fighters rising up against the most repressive regimes in the world.
- **Section 310** eliminates current prohibitions on indefinite immigration detention. Many individuals seeking protection in the United States from persecution and torture in their home countries would be directly harmed by these changes. Stateless individuals in particular often spend significant lengths of time in immigration detention as a result of their lack of nationality.
- **Section 314** criminalizes assistance to vulnerable migrants by members of our communities. This includes volunteers, community members, friends and even family members who “transport, move, harbor or shield” a refugee, asylum seeker or anyone whose immigration status has lapsed. Jesuit parish, high school, college and university communities all over the country include these individuals, and Jesuit social ministries serve them. We are called by our faith and by Catholic social teaching to enact generosity, hospitality, welcome, and solidarity with the poor and marginalized. We cannot support a bill that seeks to restrict these acts.

The Jesuit network opposes the SAFE Act, and urges Congress to do so as well. It is our hope and prayer that members of Congress can work together to create real solutions to our broken immigration system rather than continuing to create policies that harm the most vulnerable among us.

Sincerely,

Mitzi Schroeder
Director for Policy
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA



October 15, 2013

Dear Member of Congress,

I serve as the National Coordinator for Immigration and Refugee Services with the American Baptist Home Mission Societies. We have over 5000 churches in the United States and Puerto Rico. I am writing to express concerns and strong opposition to the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act (SAFE Act – H.R. 2278). Some of the provisions that this proposed legislation would require include:

- Criminalizing religious leaders and houses of worship for providing social service and humanitarian assistance to anyone regardless of immigration status
- Creating new crimes for being present in the United States without lawful immigration status
- Delegating the enforcement of national immigration laws to state and local law enforcement personnel
- Worsening expansive laws targeting terrorism that instead have consequences for refugees, asylees and stateless persons

These provisions are an affront to our ethical traditions and core principles of serving as the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. We are grounded in an ethic of love, generosity, hospitality and welcome. We find that the provisions not only counter our beliefs but attempting to comply would greatly compromise faith communities' ability to serve the marginalized. These provisions would impede or lead to the discontinuation of local food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, social service assistance for health care, housing etc. Additionally local law enforcement agencies would be over burdened with the task of enforcing national immigration laws. This responsibility would drain monetary and human resources. This would also create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation and encourage racial profiling.

As a people of faith we are deeply committed to our core principle to love our neighbor and, among other things, that love is illustrated by feeding, clothing, housing, caring for and sharing what we have with others. The unkind and harsh provisions of H.B. 2278 are contrary to all that we stand for.

We agree that the immigration laws are broken and we need reform but we seek a bill that would reflect mercy and justice and is consistent with humanitarian values, supports families, provides a pathway to citizenship for immigrant already in the U.S., and examines solutions to address the root causes of migration.

Sincerely,

Rev. Aundrea Alexander, J.D.
National Coordinator for Immigration and Refugee Services
American Baptist Home Mission Societies