



February 2, 2015

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader McConnell and all Representatives and Senators:

As a humanitarian agency that brings together 37 member communions, Church World Service seeks to fulfill the call to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger by assisting displaced persons around the globe and also by calling for reforms to immigration policies here in the United States. We have continually urged Congress to enact common sense immigration reforms with a pathway to citizenship, and we have also petitioned the President to use his authority to relieve many families of the constant fear of deportation. We encourage all policy makers to do their part to stand with immigrant families and to stop needless deportations of people contributing to and strengthening our communities. As Congress considers upcoming legislation and amendments to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations bill, we urge you to reject legislation that would negatively impact immigrant communities in your states and districts.

CWS celebrates the recent actions taken by the Administration to provide temporary relief to millions of our immigrant brothers and sisters and we are committed to working across our network to assist in its smooth implementation. We urge all members of the House and Senate to reject legislation, including amendments to the DHS appropriations bill, that would stop, interfere or weaken the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for the Parents of Americans (DAPA) programs and other provisions made possible through recent executive orders on immigration.¹ We have witnessed the positive impact of DACA on the everyday lives of thousands of young people in our communities, and know many more who will likely be impacted through expanded DACA and DAPA. The opportunity to live in the United States without the constant fear of deportation and to work legally and contribute to our economy not only positively impacts individual lives, but it strengthens the fabric of our communities. Taking away this hope of a better tomorrow would be cruel and immoral, and so we ask for your help in defeating these proposals.

CWS is deeply concerned about H.R. 399, the Secure Our Borders First Act of 2015, introduced by Rep. McCaul (R-10-TX) which would increase racial profiling of individuals living along the border and set "operational control" goals that are unrealistic and ignore the fact that many individuals have legitimate claims to asylum and protection. In spite of a proven track record for abusing its power, this bill stands to increase the power and enforcement resources for the Border Patrol without also increasing mechanisms for oversight and accountability. Border Patrol has seen increased problems with corruption, escalation of force and systemic abuse of migrants as it has doubled in size since 2004.² We urge Congress to instead support legislation that addresses the need for Border Patrol accountability, with short-term custody standards and a viable complaint process for victims of abuse.

The CWS network is also strongly opposed to H.R. 2278, the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE) Act introduced last year, and any similar legislation working to expand interior immigration enforcement efforts. Communities of faith are unanimously opposed to any legislation that would create new crimes for immigrants and individuals who provide them aid; expand inhumane immigration detention; encourage state and local law enforcement officials to collaborate with immigration enforcement efforts; or decrease protections and immigration relief for vulnerable migrants in need of protection.³ The faith community is also unanimously opposed to legislation that would rollback critical anti-trafficking protections for children and individuals seeking protection from persecution, including the improperly named "Protection of Children Act" ([H.R.5143](#)) and The Asylum Reform and Border Protection Act ([H.R.5137](#)), both of which would roll back the bipartisan Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act signed into law by President Bush and would result in children being returned back into hands of traffickers, gangs and others who seek to exploit them.

We at CWS encourage all Members of Congress to reject these proposals, both in upcoming discussions about the DHS appropriations bill and in any future legislation. We celebrate any and all progress that helps our community members remain in the United States with their families, and we affirm the recent executive orders on immigration and urge all members of Congress to support them as well. We reject proposals that criminalize immigrants, militarize our borders and remove critical protections for children and other individuals seeking safety and refuge. We pray that Congress considers the humanity of immigrants and the scriptural call to welcome the stranger and love our neighbors as members vote on these important issues. Rather than legislation that would tear families apart, dash the hopes of young people and parents of U.S. citizen and permanent resident children, and throw money at the border and enforcement efforts that have proven detrimental, we urge Congress to support immigration policies that treat our neighbors with the dignity and respect that all people deserve.

Sincerely,

Erol Kekic
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Church World Service

¹ www.whitehouse.gov/immigrationaction

² <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/10/border-patrol-the-green-monster-112220.html#ixzz3Q8y0EMvM>

³ <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/say-no-to-the-safe-act/>