

Dear Mississippi State Representatives,

As faith leaders from many different traditions, we write out of grave concern regarding the anti-immigrant legislation that is being considered in the Mississippi Legislature. 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 with a proud legacy of immigrants who helped found this nation and we recognize the valuable contributions immigrants and refugees bring to our communities and economy. Right now, the Mississippi House of Representatives is considering a bill that would threaten this legacy and undermine our beliefs in generosity, hospitality, and welcome.

The Mississippi Senate this month passed [SB 2306](#), which would force state and local police to serve as immigration enforcement officers and comply with federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainers to hold immigrants in custody. SB 2306 strips local law enforcement agencies of critical discretion, in effect conscripting them to prioritize immigration enforcement over local public safety needs, and they will be forced to pick up the bill for it too. This proposal purports to protect police officers from civil liability while enforcing, but in actuality they would make police more vulnerable to costly lawsuits. This bill creates a limitless mandate for law enforcement agencies in Mississippi to “assist” the federal government in the enforcement of immigration that would significantly burden local government with costs of holding people for ICE without reimbursement, as well as potential costs associated with litigation against the state for constitutional violations.<sup>1</sup>

These provisions would not make communities or cities in Mississippi any safer. Rather, they would reverse community-based policing efforts that are vital to public safety in our neighborhoods. Safety increases for everyone when all individuals can report dangerous situations and seek protection from violence without the fear of being deported and separated from their families.

As faith leaders, we work to uplift and support immigrants in our midst. We support policies and programs that help build welcoming communities. This legislation sends an unwelcoming message. It would undermine trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement and take away their right to determine how to practice community policing.

We are praying that you may find compassion in your discernment process and vote against any legislation that would hurt immigrants and reduce community safety. We urge you to think about the moral imperative to love our neighbor, welcome the immigrant, and care for the most vulnerable among us. Please help us stop SB 2306.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the U.S. District Court of Oregon found that the county law enforcement violated the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by detaining and incarcerating an immigrant under an ICE detainer.  
<[http://media.oregonlive.com/clackamascounty\\_impact/other/Miranda%20Olivares%20MSJ%20decision.140411.pdf](http://media.oregonlive.com/clackamascounty_impact/other/Miranda%20Olivares%20MSJ%20decision.140411.pdf)>.

Sincerely,

Reverend Barron Banks, Presbyterian Church USA

Reverend Rims Barber, Fondren Presbyterian Church

Faith Leader Aida Bone, Our Lady of Fatima - Biloxi

Sister Carol Boschert, Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon, MO

Bishop Joseph Campbell, COCHUSA

Pastor James Carstensen, Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference

Minister Jackie Castro-Cooper, Our Lady of Fatima

Pastor Tom Clark, Ascension Lutheran Church

Reverend Christopher Donald, Millsaps College

Bishop Ronnie Crudup, New Horizon Church Intl

Rabbi Matthew Dreffin, Central Conference of American Rabbis

Reverend Julian Gordy, ELCA Southeastern Synod

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Sister Patricia Hinton, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

Faith Leader Mary (Liz) Hudson, Fondren PCUSA

Reverend Barbara Hunter, Christus Victor Lutheran Church

Rabbi Debra Kassoff, Hebrew Union Congregation in Greenville

Reverend Edwin King, United Methodist (retired)

Bishop Joseph Kopacz, Catholic

Sister Susanne Lachapelle, Little Sisters of the Assumption

Faith Leader Matthew Langlinais, Our Lady of Fatima

Faith Leader Jeanne Lockett, Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle

Faith Leader Susan Maneck, Jackson Area Baha'i Cluster

Reverend Justin McCreary, Unitarian Universalist Church of Jackson

Reverend Su McLain, Fondren Presbyterian Church

Sister Melinda Medina, Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance

Reverend Allison Parvin, BethEden Lutheran Church

Reverend Joyce Antila Phipps, Casa Esperanza

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Reverend Michael Roberts, St Philipps

Sister Ceil Roeger, Dominican Sisters of Houston

Reverend Sally Fran Ross, United Methodist

Bishop Brian Seage, The Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi

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Reverend John David Simpson, Episcopal-Lutheran Mission Annunciation

Reverend Elvin Sunds, St. Therese Catholic Church

Reverend Paige Swaim-Presley, Saucier and Gateway United Methodist Churches

Faith Leader Dorothy Triplett, MS Religious Leadership Conference