Dear Governor Abbott,

As faith leaders from many different traditions, we write to condemn the anti-immigrant legislation you signed into law that will target and discriminate against our immigrant neighbors. 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 state with a proud legacy of immigrants, and we recognize the valuable contributions immigrants and refugees bring to our communities and economy.

SB 4 will prohibit state, local, and campus police departments from adopting policies that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities. SB 4 will result in state, local, and campus police serving as immigration enforcement officers to detain and hold immigrants in custody for Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE). Doing so would attempt to conscript local law enforcement to prioritize immigration enforcement over local public safety needs.

SB 4 will also allow local police officers to question the immigration status of people they not only lawfully arrest, but also “legally detain,” such as during traffic stops. SB 4 is now the pinnacle of harsh laws that promote racial profiling and would stain our state’s reputation without making it any safer.

State and local agencies that assist the federal government in the enforcement of immigration have faced significant financial burdens due to the costs of holding people for ICE without reimbursement, as well as potential costs associated with litigation against the state for constitutional violations of due process.¹

These provisions will not make communities, college campuses, or cities in Texas any safer. Rather, they will 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 of exclusion. It will undermine trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement and create a climate of fear at universities and colleges.

We are praying that you may find compassion in your discernment process and stop any legislation that hurts 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.

¹ 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].
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Reverend Sharon Freeto, United Methodist Church
Pastor Alejandro Frias, IGLESIA PENTECOSTES SOLO CON PODER DE DIOS
Reverend Taylor Fuerst, First United Methodist Church, Austin
Reverend Amelia Fulbright, Labyrinth Progressive Student Ministry
Executive Director Ruben García, Annunciation House, Inc.
Senior Pastor Domingo Garza, Iglesia Cristiana Ministerio Galaad
The Rev. Thomas Gibbons, St. Barnabas Presbyterian Church
Cantor Vicky Glikin, Temple Emanu-El
President Pastor Lynn Godsey, CEAT-Coalition of Evangelical Alliances (Pastors) of Texas
Pastora Tana Godsey, Templo De Poder
Pastor Juan González, Jesuscristo es mi refugio Inc
Pastor Michael Gregg, Royal Pane Baptist Church
Bishop Erik Gronberg, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod, ELCA
Rev. Robert Gross, Episcopal Church - Fort Worth
Pastor Francisco Guardado, Temple Of Faith Church
Treasure Leticia Guzman, Primera asamblea de Dios
Child Care Leader Areli Guzman, Life Church Midlothian Assemblies of God
Preacher / Teacher Eutolio Guzman, Primera asamblea de Dios
Rev. Dr. Sid Hall, III, Trinity Church of Austin/United Church of Christ & United Methodist
Rev. Dr. Beth Marie Halvorsen, ELCA
Dr. Helen Harkreader, UUMC
Local Superior Martha Hernandez, Roman Catholic
Pastor Maria Hernandez, Ministerio Jesus el Rey
Rabbi Kimberly Herzog Cohen, Temple Emanuel-El
The Reverend Christina Hockman, Unitarian Universalist Church of Corpus Christi
Rev. Anna Humble, United Church of Christ
Director of Global Theological Education Robert Hunt, United Methodist
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The Rev. Kevin Johnson, St. Alban's Episcopal
Minister Mary Johnston, University Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Dr. Nelly Kaakaty, American Muslim Professionals of Dallas
Rabbi Nancy Kasten, Temple Emanu-El
Rev. Cynthia Kepler-Karrer, United Methodist Church
Director Office of Justice Sr. Marcelline Koch, Dominican Sisters, Springfield IL
Deaconess Kathy Kraiza, Justice For Our Neighbors Houston/United Methodist Church
Church Board Chair Jimanne Kubiat, First Christian Church (DOC)
Bishop and Pastor Victor Lamas, Eagles Nest Apostolic church/ Apostolic Affiliation Int.
Rabbi Shira Lander, Temple Emanu El of Dallas
Rev. Dr. Duane Larson, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Houston
Dr. Jack Levison, United Methodist school of theology professor
Minister Jessie Lewis, New Day Community Church
Miss Jessie Light, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Pastor Jacqueline Linden-Schade, Preston Meadow Lutheran Church
Designated Conference Minister South Central Conference UCC Don Longbottom, South Central Conference
Pastor Jesús López , Iglesia Cristiana Rey de Reyes
Rev. John MacIver Gage, United Christian Church of Austin
Rev. Dr. Wes Magruder, Kessler Park United Methodist Church
Pastor Saul Marquez, Assemblies of God
Pastor Dora Marquez, Assemblies of God
Pastor Oseas Marquez, Church of God Pentecostal MI
Pastor Roberto Marquez, Pentecostal Church
Rev Monte Marshall, Travis Park United Methodist Church
Sister Yolanda Martinez, Sisters of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
Father Pablo Matta, Roman Catholic
Sister Mary McCauley, Sisters of Charity, BVM
Reverend Nancy McCranie, First Presbyterian Church, Elgin, Texas
Rev. Paul McEntire, YMCA of Greater Houston
Pastor Jesus M Mena, Guardian Angel Catholic church
Pastor Juan Mercado, Fellowship
Mr. Bob Michael, Holy Covenant UMC- Carrollton TX
Reverend Amy Moore, John Calvin Presbyterian Church
Pastor Rodolfo Mora, Iglesia el Shaddai of McKinney Texas
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Rev. Connie Nelson, United Methodist Church
Sister Rose Therese Nolta, Catholic
Líder at Lirios del Valle Isabel Orozco, Ministerio internacional Lirios del Valle
Pastor Hector Ortiz, Iglesia Casa de Misericordia
Ms. Melissa Ortiz, Santa Cruz Catholic Church
Chair, Austin Region Justice for Our Neighbor Saul Pacheco, St John’s United Methodist Church
Rev. Jonathan Page, First Congregational Church of Houston
Reverend Pepa Paniagua, Presbyterian Church, USA
Reverend Stephen Peters, Roman Catholic
The Rev. Dr. William Poe, Central Presbyterian Church
Pastor Nora Ponce, Templo Nueva Vida
Pastor Juan Ponce, Templo Nueva Vida
Rev. Dr. Priscilla Pope-Levison, United Methodist minister
Reverend Susan Porr, St. Matthews UMC
Pastor Daniel Puente, MINISTERIO REY DE REYES
Rev. Stephen Quill, ELCA Lutheran
Pastor Rev. Neftali Quintana, Assemblies of God
Professor of Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Care, Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, TX Nancy Ramsay, Presbyterian Church (USA)
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Chaplain Roy Ricker, United Methodist
Rabbi Debra Robbins, Temple Emanu-El
Rev Edwin Robinson, Faith in Texas
Sister Ceil Roeger, OP, Dominican Sisters of Houston
Rabbi Adam Roffman, Congregation Shearith Israel
Rev. Chuck Rolen, Disciples of Christ
Cristiano pentecostes Dolores Roman, Templo hermoso del Dios viviente
Reverend Craig Roshaven, Unitarian Universalist
Muslim Lead/Representative Noor Saadeh, Daughters of Abraham/Islamic Association of North Texas
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Carlene Schleider, Point Person in Corpus Christi for the Interfaith Welcome Coalition, Parkway Presbyterian Church
Pastor Carl Schwartz-King, United Christian Church of Austin
Marguerite Scott, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance National Response Team Member, St. Philip Presbyterian of Houston and First Presbyterian of Kerrville/PC(USA)
The Rev. Dr. Matthew Seddon, St. John's Episcopal Church, Austin
The Rev. Linda Shelton, Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church
Rabbi Cantor Robbi Sherwin, Kol Halev
Pastor Crystal Silva-McCormick, United Church of Christ
Rev Mark Skrabacz, San Gabriel Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Dr. William Slavick, Roman Catholic
Reverend Traci Smith, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Rev. Lil Smith, PCUSA
Reverend Genevieve Sprinkle, Interfaith
Rev. Nikki Stahl, United Christian Church - UCC/DOC
Outreach Director Alyssa Stebbing, Trinity Episcopal Church
Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Stein, ELCA
Member Freda Stern, Temple Emanu-El
Dr. Andy Stoker, First United Methodist Church-Dallas
Reverend Cathy Stone, First United Methodist Church
Chaplain Matt Stone, The Episcopal Church
Imam Omar Suleiman, Faith Forward Dallas
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Pastor Craig Taylor, Willow Meadows Baptist Church
Reverend Tricia Tedrow, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Reverend Karen Thompson, Metropolitan Community Church of Austin
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Elder of the United Methodist Church Sue Wells, Retired, Rio Texas Conference
Reverend San Williams, University Presbyterian Church
The Reverend Sharon Williams, St Michael's Episcopal Church
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Rabbi Brian Zimmerman, Beth El Congregation