

Dear Members of Congress,

As faith-based organizations, denominations, congregations, and religious leaders across the United States, we stand united against attempts to scale back legal immigration and place stumbling blocks in front of family reunification. We are deeply troubled by the introduction of the RAISE Act by Senators Cotton (R-AR) and Perdue (R-GA), as it would deny millions the opportunity to reunite with family members and contribute to our shared communities. Such efforts ignore the importance of family unity and deny the essential contributions immigrants make that have allowed our country to thrive, strengthen, and welcome new peoples and cultures.

The RAISE Act would permanently cap refugee admissions at 50,000 per year, the lowest resettlement goal in U.S. history, during the largest global refugee crisis in world history. The average annual resettlement goal between when Congress passed the 1980 Refugee Act and today has been 95,000, and the average number of resettled refugees has been 80,000. Turning our backs on the world's most vulnerable and resilient people, at the very time of the greatest need, flies in the face of our values and contradicts the welcome for refugees we see every day in our congregations and communities.

This legislation would impose dramatic cuts to legal immigration, by various estimates between 50 and 70 percent overall and an 85 percent cut to family-based visas, placing nearly insurmountable hurdles in front of families seeking to reunite. The bill claims to shift our current immigration system towards a merit-based approach, but in reality would reduce visas both for employment and family purposes. Such cuts stand against our faith traditions to love our neighbor and welcome the sojourner, and the implementation of these cuts would be devastating to families who are members of our congregations and communities.

Family-based visas are already restricted to spouses, children, parents and siblings of U.S. citizens and spouses and children of Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs, or "green card holders"). Due to tight numerical restrictions, backlogs average seven years and can be as long as 23 years. When it is impossible to access the legal immigration system in a timely way, people resort to entering the United States however they can, including crossing borders illegally and overstaying visas. The RAISE Act would exacerbate this problem by eliminating the ability of U.S. citizens to sponsor their brothers and sisters and making it nearly impossible for them to sponsor their parents. It would also stop green card holders from sponsoring their children over the age of 18 and make all family-based visas harder to access. The bill would delete more than four million individuals' applications for eliminated visas, and bar individuals from applying for U.S. citizenship if their families have not reimbursed the government for any expenses incurred. As people of faith, we believe that a parent's desire to be with their children is real, regardless of age, and that the government should not separate siblings or crush the dreams of those who have waited years and even decades to be reunited with their family members.

The Torah, Quran, and New Testament include many examples of close relationships between adult children and their parents, as well as siblings, demonstrating the importance of a unified family. Many people of faith first learn about the brokenness of the immigration system by witnessing families in their congregations suffer through separation due to visa backlogs, detention, and deportation. America needs, and deserves, an immigration system that prioritizes family unity. We can and must do better than this discriminatory, inhumane bill.

The RAISE Act also eliminates the Diversity Visa, which provides up to 50,000 visas annually for immigrants who do not have access to employment- or family-based visas. Congress established the Diversity Visa in 1990 to encourage and facilitate immigration to the United States from countries with historically low rates of immigration. The program reaches beyond those with family or business ties in the United States and creates a mechanism for racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse populations to lawfully immigrate that would otherwise not exist. As people of faith, we recognize the inherent dignity and worth of every person and lift up the diverse contributions they make to our communities. Eliminating the Diversity Visa would only exacerbate the unjust nature of the U.S. immigration system.

Immigration is integral to the growth of our economy, our schools, and our congregations. Today, immigrants and their families are key members of our communities, serving as religious leaders, teachers,

business owners, and elected officials. Immigration is also a critical component of building a strong American economy. A 2016 study conducted by 14 prominent economists found that immigrants have no negative effects on the wages and employment of native-born workers. In fact, in the long term, immigrants and their families give billions back to the economy and the government. Furthermore, states across the nation rely on immigrants to grow the industries that allow their communities to thrive. Recent studies have concluded that immigrants are entrepreneurs and business-owners at higher rates than native-born Americans, owning three million businesses, generating more than \$65 million a year in income, and employing nearly six million Americans.

As faith-based organizations, denominations, congregations and faith leaders representing millions of constituents across the country, we urge all Members of Congress to reject the RAISE Act, and to instead find real solutions that make our immigration system more accessible and in line with the needs of families and workers. We remember the countless people in Scripture who found homes for themselves and their families in a foreign land. Our faith backgrounds commit us to supporting policy reforms that improve our immigration system and oppose proposals that take us backwards. Together, we stand ready to work with you on immigration reform that strengthens our families, communities, economy, and country.

Sincerely,

**National**

Church World Service

The Episcopal Church

Presbyterian Church (USA)

The Reverend Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Jim Winkler, General Secretary/President, National Council of Churches

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

American Jewish Committee (AJC)

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

Irish Apostolate USA

Christian Community Development Association

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

Anti-Defamation League

Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed Church in North America

HIAS

Franciscan Action Network

Union for Reform Judaism

National Council of Jewish Women

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Interfaith Worker Justice

Communion of Synodal Catholic Churches

Partnership for Global Justice

Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center

Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Bend the Arc Jewish Action

Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Priests of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province

Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice (UUSJ)  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
National Justice for Our Neighbors  
Multifaith Alliance for Syrian Refugees  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
Leadership Team of the Felician Sisters of North America  
Daughters of Charity - USA  
Community of the Sisters of St. Anne, St. Marie Province  
School Sisters of Notre Dame - CPP Immigration Committee  
Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill  
Wheaton Franciscans Justice and Peace Office  
BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz  
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Sister Carmella Campione, Congregation of Saint Joseph  
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Rev. Jeniffer Rodríguez, Ossining, NY  
Rev. John P. Martin, NY  
Rev. Fr. Joseph Varghese, Syrian Orthodox Church, Albany, NY  
Rabbi Michael E Feinberg, New York, NY  
Lee Ann Grace, Elder, University Presbyterian, Buffalo, NY  
Rev. Laurie Stuart, Narrowsburg, NY  
Rev. Melodie Long, Sackets Harbor, NY  
University United Methodist Church, Buffalo, NY  
Kathleen Moore, Albany, NY  
Rev. William Brisotti, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church, Wyandanch, NY  
Rev. Miriam Shelton, Ft. Washington Heights PC, New York, NY  
Br. Michael Potvin-Frost, OFH, Plattsburgh, NY  
Rev. Paul Dreher-Wiberg, Warners, NY  
Rev. Mark Lukens, LI Chapter, The Interfaith Alliance; Bethany Congregational Church, East Rockaway  
Merle Showers, Buffalo, NY  
Elder Maria Studer, Levittown, NY  
CSJ Non-Violence community, New York, NY  
Sister Christina Marie Luczynski, Syracuse, NY  
Rev. Taryn Mattice, Ithaca, NY  
Janet S Matthews, Rockvile Centre, NY  
Sister Conchetta LoPresti, OSF, Williamsville, NY  
Margaret M Barrett, OSU, NY

## **Ohio**

Sharon Gaeth Nichols, North Canton, OH  
Sr. Madonna Hoying, SFP, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Josie Chrosniak, HM, Humility of Mary JPIC Office, Cleveland, OH  
Karen Hartman, SFP, Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, Cincinnati, OH  
Sister Patricia Gardner, Toledo, OH  
Carole Dugan, Lima, OH  
Rev. Dan Bryant, Lakewood, OH  
Van Farowe Dean, Cleveland, OH  
Fr. Vincent Petersen OFM Conv., Carey, OH  
Sister Gene Poore, OP, Columbus, OH  
Sr. Joan Supel, OP (Dominican Sisters of Peace, Columbus, OH  
Judith Engel, Columbus, OH  
Kelly Litt, Justice Promoter, Dominican Sisters of Peace, Columbus, OH  
MaryJo Tol. En Camino, migrant an immigrant out reach, OH  
Rev. Oommen K Thomas, Strongsville, OH  
Sharon Havelak OSF, Sylvania, OH  
Sister Sheila Marie Tobbe, Lyndhurst, OH  
Amy McFrederick OP, Akron, OH

## **Oklahoma**

Rev. Nancy Sharp, Oklahoma City, OK

Catherine Darcy, RSM, Ada, OK  
Rev. Gerald L. Davis, Church of the Restoration Unitarian Universalist, Tulsa, OK  
Rev. Dr. Kirt E. Moelling, St. Stephen's United Methodist Church, Broken Arrow, OK  
Rev. Kayla Bonewell, Oklahoma City, OK  
Rev. Dwight Welch, United Church of Norman UCC, Norman, OK  
Rev. Dr. Suzanne W Nichols, Oklahoma City, OK

## **Oregon**

Social Justice Team, West Hills Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Portland, OR  
Ainsworth United Church of Christ, Portland, OR  
Rae Anne Lafrenz, Portland, OR  
Immigrant Justice Action Group-First Unitarian Portlandd, Portland, OR  
Claudia Roberts, Peace with Justice Coordinator, Portland, OR  
Rev. Kathy Keener, First Presbyterian Church, Pendleton, OR  
Rev. Dr. Lorne Bostwick, Senior Pastor, Central Presbyterian Church, Eugene, OR  
Rev. M. Lynne Smouse, Portland, OR  
Rev. Dennis James Sagun Parker, Portland, OR  
Rev. Dr. Sally L. Godard, McMinnville, OR

## **Pennsylvania**

Sr. Janet Jeffers, I.H.M., Scranton, PA  
Eleanor Marconi, Scranton, PA  
Sister Mindy Welding, IHM, Scranton, PA  
Jean Louise Bachetti, IHM, PA  
Sr. Anne Mary, IHM, Scranton, PA  
Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, PA, Philadelphia, PA  
Sr. Carol Lubas IHM, Scranton, PA  
Reb Sarah Cohen, Philadelphia, PA  
Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Advocacy Network, Harrisburg, PA  
HIAS Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA  
Ms. Karen Paulus, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, PA  
Sr. Madeline Swaboski, IHM, Scranton, PA  
Yvonne Marlier, Jenkintown, PA  
Society Hill Synagogue, Philadelphi, PA  
Shelley Chamberlain, Elkins Park, PA  
Rev. Sandra L. Strauss, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Harrisburg, PA  
Avi Vardi, Philadelphia, PA  
Sister Mary Norbert Long, Greensburg, PA  
Sister Suzanne Gallagher, RSM - Midatlantic Community of Sisters of Mercy, PA  
Sr. Patt WalshOHM, Scranton, PA  
Sisters of the Humility of Mary, Villa Maria, PA  
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, PA  
Margie Chachkin, Maple Glen, PA  
Rabbi Alan LaPayover, Philadelphia, PA  
Deacon Carol Detweiler, Gilbertsville, PA  
REf. Charlotte H. Whiting, Lancaster, PA  
United Church of Christ Pastor, Lewisburg, PA  
Rabbi Gregory S Marx, Congregation Beth Or, PA  
Rev. Leah Knox, PA  
Lenore Thomas, IHM, Scranton, PA  
Sr. Mary, St. Dennis, Bethlehem, PA  
Sr. Mary Mercy, Sisters of IHM, PA  
Rabbi Maurice Harris, Elkins Park, PA  
Rev. DVMcFarland, Pittsburgh, PA

Rev. Bryant Brown, Thomas Paine Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Collegetown, PA  
Rev. Mary Schmotzer, Shiloh United Church of Christ, Danville, PA  
Rev. Anthony W Janton. OLHC Catholic church, Abington, PA  
Pamela Kerns - Christian Education Director, Kingston, PA  
Mrs. Pam Short, Mission Leader Felician Services, Blairsville, Derry Township Westmorland County, PA  
Rabbi Rachel Kobrin, Elkins Park, PA  
Rabbi Robert S Leib, Abington, PA  
Rabbi Elliot Holin, Elkins Park, PA  
Rev. John Woodcock, West Chester, PA  
Sister Jane Snyder, IHM, Scranton, PA  
Casa San Jose, Pittsburgh, PA  
Betty P. Schwarz, Pittsburgh, PA  
Suzanne Polen, Pittsburgh, PA

### **Rhode Island**

Janet Davies, RI

### **South Carolina**

Pastor Carleatha Benson, UMC - SC ELCC Chair, Lake City, SC  
Sister Johnna Ciezobka CSSF Felician Sisters, Kingstree, SC  
Rev. Emily Sutton, Bethel and Philadelphia United Methodist Church, Rock Hill, SC  
Rev. Kristin Dollar, Faith United Methodist Church, Greenville, SC, SC

### **South Dakota**

Rev. Jean McCusker, Sioux Falls, SD

### **Tennessee**

Rev. Dr. Gordon D. Gibson, Knoxville, TN  
Raul B.,. Alegria, MARCHA United Methodist Church, Franklin, TN

### **Texas**

CDR Steven M. Lanoux, Ph.D., Port Aransas, TX  
Dr. Charles Rives, Denton, TX  
Cynthia Rives, Denton, TX  
Dalila Reynoso, Tyler, Texas, TX  
Rev. Chuck Freeman, Executive Director Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry, Austin, TX  
Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Women, Ft Worth, TX  
Ms. Marty Vaughan, Jonesville, TX  
Anne Barker, BPFNA-LaPaz, Fort Worth, TX  
John Morris, St. John's UMC, Georgetown, TX  
Larry L Smith, Live Oak UU Church, Cedar Park, TX  
Thomas McPhail Ubaldo, Richmond, TX  
Rev. Dr. Edward Kern, San Antonio, TX  
Bishop Michael Rinehart, TX  
The Rev. David A. Roschke, Houston, TX  
Sister Rosemarie Goins, Felician Franciscan, Laredo, TX  
Rev. Ingrid Akers, Marvin UMC, Tyler, TX  
Rev. Jonathan Britt, Houston, TX  
Sister Sharon Altendorf, San Antonio, TX  
Pastor Kris Bair, Corpus Christi, TX  
Rev Dr Elizabeth Nash, Heart of Texas Association, United Church of Christ, Austin, TX

Rev. Lora BrandisTX  
Rev. Scottie McIntyre Johnson, San Marcos UU Fellowship, San Marcos, TX  
Thomas J Norris, Santa Rosa de Lima, Austin, Texas, TX  
Rev. Judy Brock, Frisco, TX  
Rev. Dr. Becky Edmiston-Lange, Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church, Houston, TX  
Rev Michael Redmond, Kerens, TX  
Rev. Shari Woodbury, Westside Unitarian Universalist Church, Fort Worth, TX  
Rev. Suzanne F. Isasacs, San Antonio Region Justice For Our Neighbors, San Antonio, Texas, TX  
Ruth McPhail Ubaldo, Richmond, TX  
Sister Dorothy Moczygemba, St. Clare Church, San Antonio, TX  
Rev. Katherine Cook, TX  
Bishop Ray Tiemann, TX  
Rev. Tricia Tedrow, San Antonio, TX  
Dora Gonzalez, Austin, TX

### **Utah**

Rev. Steven A. Klemz, Salt Lake City, UT  
Rev. Ray Kerley, Murray Baptist Church, Murray, UT

### **Virginia**

Sheila Clark, Unitarian, Locust Grove, VA  
Just Neighbors Ministry, VA  
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, Richmond, VA  
Rev. Timothy J. Hickey, Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church, Arlington, VA  
Susan Calhoun-Sousie, Fredericksburg, VA  
Cheryl W. Moore, Arlington, VA  
Linda Mashburn, member of the Baptist Peace Fellowship, Abingdon, VA  
Clint Holt, St. Paul UMC Church Council, Woodbridge VA  
Rabbi Jeffrey Saxe, Falls Church, VA  
Lana Heath de Martinez, M.Div., Richmond, VA  
Father Les Schmidt, Glenmary, Big Stone Gap, VA  
Rev. Dr. Debra W. Hafner, Reston, VA  
Rev. Dr. Jean Wright, Fairfax, VA  
Rev. Susan Graceson, Falls Church, VA  
Jennifer Phinney, Fredericksburg, VA  
Steve Rabson, Fredericksburg, VA

### **Washington**

AIDA Bound, MSW, Wenatchee, WA  
Charlene Hudon, SP, Seattle, WA  
Jewish Family Service of Seattle, WA  
Nancy Horman, Seattle, WA  
Maggie Finley, Chaplain Emeritus, Seattle, WA  
Rev. James R. Bridges (retired), Everett, WA  
Rev. Wendy Taylor UCC retired, Olympia, WA  
Rev. Thomas Quigley, Retired President Director, Church Council of Greater Seattle, Seattle, WA  
Bishop Kirby Unti, WA  
Chaplain Mir Plemmons, WA

### **Washington, DC**

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, Washington DC  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee & Immigration Ministries, Washington, DC

Bro. Brian McLauchlin, Washington, DC  
Marie Dennis, co-president, Pax Christi International, Washington, DC  
Rev. Maria Swearingen, Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, DC  
Rabbi Elizabeth Richman, Jews United for Justice, Washington, DC  
Rev. Jason Carson Wilson, Washington DC  
Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Washington, DC

### **Wisconsin**

Rev. Robert Harman, Danbury, WI  
Sr. Cecilia Fandel, Ladysmith, WI  
Ramona Dombrowski, CSSF, Milwaukee, WI  
Racine Dominicans, WI  
Wisconsin Conference UCC, DeForest, WI  
SSSF, Milwaukee, WI  
A Ruling Elder in the PCUSA, Neenah, WI  
member of the Felician Sisters, Manitowoc, WI  
Mary Anne Gerlach, First United Methodist Church, Whitewater, WI  
Beth Moore, La Crosse, WI  
Rev. Dr. Charles A. Wolfe, UCC (retired) Prescott, Wisconsin  
Bishop Gerald Mansholt, Appleton, WI  
Dr. David W. Scott, Neenah, WI  
Rev. Dr. Dan Dick, Sun Prairie, WI  
Pastor Frederick Trost, President of the Wisconsin Conference, United Church of Christ  
Franz Rigert, Conference Minister Wisconsin UCC, DeForest, WI  
Rev Jack W. Kraaz, WI  
sister lois aceto, racine, WI  
Lisa Hart, Associate Conference Minister, Wisconsin Conference UCC, Fitchburg, WI  
Rev. Sonja L. Ingebritsen, Madison, WI  
Sister Mary Ellen Paulson, O.P., Racine, WI  
Bishop Paul Erickson, Milwaukee, WI  
Sister Paula Marie Jarosz, O.P., Racine, WI  
Sister Ruth Battaglia CSA, WI  
Rev. Tom Williams, Whitefish Bay, WI  
susan elias, madison, WI  
Kenneth Foote, WI

### **West Virginia**

Congregation of St. Joseph, Wheeling, WV  
Judith Ann Teufel, CSJ, Charleston, WV