



CWS Strongly Opposes H.R.4760, the *Securing America's Future Act*

As a 71-year old humanitarian organization representing 37 Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox communions and 34 refugee resettlement offices across the country, Church World Service (CWS) urges all Members of Congress to oppose H.R.4760, the *Securing America's Future Act*, an the anti-immigrant [proposal](#) by Representatives Goodlatte (R-VA-6), Martha McSally (R-AZ-2), Michael McCaul (R-TX-10), Raúl Labrador (R-ID-1), and Meadows (R-NC-11). Congress should instead support H.R.3440, the *Dream Act of 2017*. It is critical that the Dream Act be enacted as clean legislation, without enforcement provisions such as funding for detention, deportation, or border militarization or proposals that would dismantle opportunities for family reunification. Our collective moral responsibility to welcome and protect is in line with treasured American values of humanity, solidarity, and perseverance. We cannot use these young people's plight as an excuse to escalate raids on their parents and community members. Congress must prioritize the immediate, uncompromised enactment of the Dream Act.

H.R.4760 is not a permanent solution for dreamers, as it offers an insufficient three-year renewable legal status without a pathway to citizenship. Dreamers are immigrant youth who are parents and doctors; they serve in the military and as police officers; they rescued, [and died rescuing](#), Harvey flood victims; and they teach our children in our schools. [91% of Dreamers](#) are employed, pay taxes, and contribute to Social Security. The [average age](#) dreamers entered the United States is 6 years old. Some don't even [speak the language](#) of the country where they were born. Already, [more than 15,000 DACA recipients](#) have lost their status since September 5, 2017. The bipartisan Dream Act has [broad support from the faith community, state and local elected leaders, business leaders, and faith](#) and [secular](#) educators, and would provide the pathway to citizenship that would treat dreamers with the dignity they deserve.

This bill threatens the sanctity of family unity by drastically cutting family-based visas, which are already restricted to spouses, children, parents, and siblings of U.S. citizens and only spouses and children of Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs). Already, backlogs of family visas can be as long as 23 years. This bill would eliminate the ability of green card holders to sponsor their children over the age of 21, even if they age out while awaiting their visa, and would also terminate the Diversity Visa program. Being able to see your family members, hold your children, and live with your family are the most basic of family values. The family structure is the foundation of our congregations, communities, and civic entities. We know that when families are in the U.S. together, they invest in the U.S. rather than dividing income and attention to send remittances and worrying about their family's wellbeing overseas. To prevent family unification would not only devastate individual's lives, it would turn our backs as a nation to our collective future and invalidate our claim to prioritize family values.

H.R.4760 would also authorize a wasteful and redundant border wall, expand mandatory detention, and grow the deportation force by 5,000 Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers. The United States has robust border security measures in place to protect national security interests, [spending more than \\$18 billion](#) on immigration enforcement, more than all other federal law enforcement agencies combined. This includes drones, mobile surveillance systems, video surveillance towers, 11,000 underground sensors, 700 miles of fencing, Blackhawk helicopters, and 18,127 border patrol agents at the southern border alone. This dramatic militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border region has already stifled the economic vitality and overall wellbeing of U.S. border communities, and this bill would further harm American communities, businesses, and landowners. Given that much of the land along the Texas border is privately-held, the administration will face expensive, lengthy court battles to seize it from hundreds of American ranchers, farmers, and other land owners. Additional border wall construction would also be exorbitant, with an estimated initial cost of \$21 billion.

Meanwhile, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has already proven that it cannot responsibly carry out many of its functions, as it has refused to exercise prosecutorial discretion and has apprehended [DACA recipients](#), a [Methodist lay leader in Kansas](#), a [mother in Arizona](#), [men leaving a hypothermia shelter](#), and [other family and community members](#). Border Patrol has [operated with impunity](#) for years, with [more than 50 people having died](#) in encounters with CBP agents, and CBP agents having been implicated in [more than 35 cases of sexual misconduct](#) between 2012 and 2014, a rate much higher than other law enforcement agencies. Throwing more resources at an irresponsible agency for the sole purpose of appealing to fringe groups within the President's base is fiscally wasteful and will cause long-term damage to how our country implements immigration policies.

H.R.4760 also incorporates *Kate's Law*, which would impose even more severe penalties and expand the federal government's ability to prosecute individuals for "illegal reentry"— even though prosecutions for migration-related offenses already make up more than 50% of all federal prosecutions. At the same time, this bill removes critical protections for individuals who reenter the United States in order to seek protection, which would place asylum seekers at risk of being returned to the violence and persecution they fled. New barriers to protection are unnecessary and would dangerously impede our obligations under [international](#) and U.S. law¹ We have seen how Border Patrol's current practices violate existing U.S. law and treaty obligations by preventing viable asylum claims from moving forward. DHS has found that in some areas, Border Patrol refers asylum seekers for [criminal prosecution](#) despite the fact that they have expressed fear of persecution. In May 2017, a [report](#) was released highlighting that many asylum seekers, who had expressed a fear of returning to their home countries are being turned away by CBP agents.

As communities of faith, we are united by principles of compassion, stewardship, and justice. What we need are real solutions and immigration policies that treat our neighbors with the dignity and respect that all people deserve and affirm local law enforcement officer's efforts to build trust with their communities. CWS urges all Members of Congress to reject H.R.4760, the *Securing America's Future Act*, to instead support H.R.3440, the *Dream Act of 2017*, and to pursue immigration policies that treat our neighbors with the dignity and respect all people deserve.

¹ Immigration and Nationality Act § 208, 8 U.S.C. § 1157.