

# THE *Episcopal* CHURCH

## CIR Talking Points

We need an immigration system that protects and prioritizes family unity.

- **Family-based visas should be increased** so that U.S. citizens and greencard holders (lawful permanent residents) do not have to wait years to be reunited. At minimum, there should be a temporary increase in family visas to clear the current backlog with integrity.
- We oppose the elimination or weakening of current family visa categories in favor employment visas. Employment visas also need to be increased, but **not at the expense of** the family immigration system. It should not be a zero sum game- workers deserve the rights to be with their families and families work. Congress should increase both family-based and employment-based visas.
- The right to family unity and to family reunification is a **fundamental right afforded to all U.S. citizens**- this is why the same-sex partners and spouses of U.S. citizens and green card holders should be included under immigration law. No citizen should have to choose between their family and their country.
- Eliminating family categories or restrictions to the family system **hurt immigrant women**. 69.7% of all immigrant women attain legal status through family based visas. In their countries of origin many women are denied access to education, resources, and job opportunities, making them overrepresented in the family-based categories.

We need a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants that is **timely, fair, and enforceable**.

- We support an earned pathway to citizenship that includes learning English and background checks but we **do not support overly punitive measures** such as making legalization contingent upon enforcement measures or a legal status that is less than citizenship with restricted access to basic civil rights such as voting or the ability to sponsor family members.
- A pathway that assists in clearing the back log is vital- those wishing to legalize should not be sent to the “back of the line” where they will wait decades. Students who qualify for the DREAM Act or have received DACA should be provided an expedited path.
- For the majority of immigrants who entered without inspection or overstayed their visa, even if they marry a U.S. citizen, it is very difficult or impossible to obtain a visa and “get in line.”

Immigration **enforcement must be reformed** to be humane and proportional, respecting the dignity of every human being and providing due process protections to all.

- Programs like **Secure Communities** that deputize local law enforcement to enforce immigration laws, leading to the detention of immigrants with no serious criminal records, destroying families, and discouraging victims to report crimes **should be terminated immediately**.
- Humane and fiscally responsible alternatives to detention should be considered and offered to immigrants who qualify.

Support for refugees and other vulnerable populations should be included in comprehensive immigration reform.

- Many of the family reunification issues faced by immigrants are faced by refugees. Refugees and asylees can also become caught in the immigration enforcement system, retraumatizing those who have arrived in our country seeking refuge from persecution and a peaceful life.

OFFICE of GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

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