



**TESTIMONY ON OF ALEXANDER D. BAUMGARTEN AND KATIE CONWAY ON
BEHALF OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH¹**

FEBRUARY 13, 2013

We thank Senator Leahy, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Ranking Member Grassley for the opportunity to submit this testimony. We welcome this hearing on the need for comprehensive immigration reform because we believe that our immigration system is broken, and that we as a nation deserve an immigration system that reflects our values and our history. Our nation and our faith find foundation in the belief that all people are created in the likeness of God and should therefore be treated with dignity, equality, and fairness under our laws.

The Episcopal Church's support for comprehensive and humane reform of our immigration laws stems from our decades-long commitment to immigrants and refugees, rooted in our biblical mandate to welcome the stranger and serve the "least of these," among us. For over 60 years, the Episcopal Church has resettled refugees fleeing persecution and has served as a forceful advocate for the needs of refugees, immigrants and other at-risk migrants for whom stronger protection is needed under our laws. This commitment to protection has led our highest governing body, the General Convention, to pass multiple resolutions in support of an immigration system that allows undocumented immigrants with established roots in the United States access to a pathway to citizenship. This includes a commitment the rights of all families, including the families of same-sex partners and spouses, to reunify without undue delay; labor protections under the law for both U.S. and migrant workers; and common-sense enforcement policies that respect the dignity and worth of every human being.

Each day, in congregations, diocese and communities across the country, the "strangers" among us enrich our lives and contribute to the multiethnic tradition of the American Dream. Immigrants of all skill levels, from those who pick the food that nourishes us to those who care for our children and elders to those whose technological innovations fix our computers, contribute economically, socially and spiritually to our communities. That is why we believe that any immigration reform must reform the entire system and avoid pitting different causes of migration and groups of immigrants against one another. Workers of all skill levels should be allowed to offer their needed contributions to our economy and they should be allowed to keep their families intact. Our system must not deny the socio-economic necessity of family, and the employment and family-immigration systems should be viewed as complimentary rather than competitive. Family members help one another integrate, pursue job opportunities, start their own businesses, and provide the foundations of healthy communities.

Our immigration system should be reformed so that immigrants who wish to reunify with their families or seek employment in the United States do not have to make impossible choices between our immigration laws and the people they love. Our Church recognizes the importance

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of adhering to our nation's laws, but we believe we must work change the laws if they do not respect the dignity of human beings or respond to the needs of communities. This call to right relationship within human communities is a cornerstone of the Judeo-Christian scriptural and ethical tradition, and finds expression for Episcopalians in the promise each makes at baptism to "strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being."

Our immigration system must be transformed to into a just and humane system that discerns between those who enter illegally to do us harm and those who enter because our system cannot provide them with a clear and timely path to family reunification or legal employment. The fundamental principles of legal due process should be granted to all persons and all immigration enforcement policies should be proportional and humane, which is why the Episcopal Church has called for the immediate termination of destructive enforcement programs like Secure Communities, 287-g, and the implementation of community alternatives to the costly prison-like immigration detention system.

We hope that this hearing provides us with the first step towards the justice and peace that we seek. Thank you for carrying the costly burden of public service, and for the opportunity to submit these views to the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexander D. Baumgarten and Katie Conway

