

## **Advocating for Immigration Reform The Episcopal Church**

### **Overview**

Immigrants enter the United States to obtain jobs, feed families, reunite with loved ones, gain opportunities and more. Immigration to the U.S. is generally granted for three reasons: employment, family reunification, and humanitarian protection. The U.S. immigration system is highly regulated and subject to numerical limitations and eligibility requirements. Currently, there is no established pathway to citizenship for undocumented people living in the U.S, and many families live in constant fear of separation. Our immigration system does not reflect the needs of our modern economy, families, or communities seeking to thrive.

### **Episcopal Church Policy on Immigration**

Firmly rooted in our ministry of welcome, the Episcopal Church has become a national leader in immigration advocacy. Informed by their experiences working with and in immigrant communities, individuals, congregations, diocese, deputies and bishops have brought the broken pieces of our immigration system to General Convention. The resolutions passed by General Convention form the immigration policy backbone of the Episcopal Church and guide the work of the Office of Government Relations in their advocacy work and Episcopalian advocates across the country.

### **Priority Issue Areas**

#### *Maintaining family unity*

Family unity is the crux of successful communities. The current Administration has kept families apart through a variety of means, including clamping down on refugee resettlement, but in May 2018 instituted an official policy that led to the separation of thousands of children from their parents at the southern border. Over the course of several months, these family separations garnered incredible push back from people of faith and good conscious. The Episcopal Church held a 12-hour Vigil for Family Unity, advocated directly to Congress about this policy, and continues to engage in advocacy calling for family unity to be the center of our immigration policies.

#### *Building a pathway to citizenship*

For the majority of the 11 million undocumented immigrants residing in the United States, there is no accessible legal pathway through which they can adjust their status and therefore remain with their families and seek lawful employment. The Episcopal Church supports nothing less than a pathway to full citizenship for undocumented immigrants wishing to come out of the shadows.

#### *Protecting Dreamers*

The Episcopal Church supports legislation that would provide a path to citizenship for undocumented youth who arrived in this country as infants or children and have grown up as members of our communities. Every child growing up in America deserves the opportunity to

grow into full stature as a member of our society and to achieve his or her dreams. Withholding legal status from these children not only hurts them, but it deprives America of future generations of dedicated citizens, innovators, entrepreneurs and public servants.

#### *Enacting reasonable and compassionate enforcement & security measures*

The Episcopal Church supports common sense immigration enforcement policies that respect the dignity and worth of every human being. Those who break our immigration laws in order to do us harm need to be prevented from doing so, but the increased militarization of the border, programs that encourage racial profiling, and prison-like detention for migrants and families is not the solution. The Episcopal Church supports alternatives to costly and prison-like detention for individuals who pose no threat to public safety, and the end to programs that separate families and erode trust between law enforcement and immigrant communities, such as the 287-g and the Secure Communities program.

#### *Public Charge*

On September 22, 2018, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced a rule that discards longstanding policy about the meaning and application of the “public charge” provisions of immigration law. The proposed public charge rule would punish immigrants going through official immigration processes and their families for applying for or receiving benefits for themselves or their family. This would mean the use of Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicare Part D, the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program or Public Housing, could render a family member ineligible for a green card or unable to keep their family together. The Episcopal Church has spoken out against this and will engage in a public comment period to challenge this proposed rule that will greatly harm the well-being of immigrants.

#### *Establishing long-term solutions for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders*

TPS is an immigration status provided to nationals of certain countries experiencing problems that place their nationals at risk if deported there or that would compromise the foreign government’s ability to absorb the return of its nationals. It provides a work permit and stay of deportation to foreign nationals from those countries who are in the United States at the time the U.S. government makes the designation. In the past year, the Secretary of Homeland Security has eliminated TPS for hundreds of thousands of individuals who rely on those protections. The Episcopal Church is engaged in advocacy

#### **Take Action**

Join the Episcopal Public Policy Network <https://advocacy.episcopalchurch.org> to advocate directly to your elected officials about protecting and supporting immigrants.

Download “Ten Actions to Accompany Undocumented Immigrants”

<https://cqrcengage.com/episcopal/file/oSxFvGnbj1Z/10%20Actions%20to%20Accompany%20Undocumented%20Immigrants%202017.pdf>