



Jesuit Migration Network in the US and Canada

BACKGROUND

During his 2015 address, Pope Francis reminded Congress, “In recent centuries, millions of people came to this land to pursue their dream of building a future in freedom. We, the people of this continent, are not fearful of foreigners, because most of us were once foreigners...We must not be taken aback by their numbers, but rather view them as persons, seeing their faces and listening to their stories, trying to respond as best we can to their situation. To respond in a way which is always humane, just and fraternal.”

As members of the Jesuit Migration Network, we witness the realities of migrants at different stages of their journeys. As representatives of Jesuit universities, parishes, and other ministries, we stand with the Pope, the U.S. Catholic Bishops, and the U.S. Jesuit Provincials in asking for foreign policy, border policy, and immigration policy that honors the human dignity and family unity of migrants.

Legislative action should address the immediate needs of immigrant community members as well as the systemic causes of migration.

Address the conditions that drive people to flee their home countries. People have the right not to migrate and to remain in their home community and country. The U.S. should examine the root causes of migration and address these factors with long-term solutions. We support rights-based foreign policies that assist anti-corruption efforts, community-based violence prevention strategies, and sustainable rural development, address sexual and gender-based violence, and increase access to justice. These programs should be designed and implemented with the consultation and active participation of civil society organizations. We oppose sending foreign assistance that supports abusive security forces in the region. When conditions in countries of origin do not allow for people to stay, they also do not allow for people to safely return and reintegrate.

Provide access to protection for individuals fleeing violence. When conditions in their home countries do not allow them to stay, people have the right to migrate. Individuals who express fear of returning to their home countries should be referred to an asylum officer for fair consideration of their claims, according to US and international law. They should not be criminally prosecuted for pursuing this right. The U.S. should uphold due process, the right not to be detained indefinitely, to not be returned to danger, and the right to maintain family unity and not be separated. Increased border enforcement should not come at the cost of deterring individuals from seeking protection.

Provide individuals impacted by the suspension of temporary programs with access to a path to citizenship in recognition that they are woven into the fabric of our country and communities. We support a path to citizenship for those with DACA and Temporary Protected Status, as well as for other undocumented people.

Create safe and humane communities by reducing the detrimental effects of detention and deportation on families. We oppose an increase in enforcement spending in the interior and on the border and believe that the U.S. has a responsibility to ensure that immigration law enforcement is professional, accountable, and humane. We must allow local law enforcement officials to focus on criminal laws, leaving civil codes to immigration officials. We also need more robust and transparent oversight of agencies responsible for immigration enforcement: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In addition, the United States must change its detention and deportation practices to preserve immigrants' dignity and safety. These changes should keep families together during the deportation process, inform individuals in their own language of their rights and how to complain about mistreatment, and allow Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to access CBP facilities. While the screening of CBP agents has greatly improved, reform proposals are needed to address the lack of sufficient screening of previously hired agents, as well as the improper training, oversight, and accountability of agents.

OUR REQUESTS

The Jesuit Migration Network urges the Senator to stand for compassionate principles that respond to the immediate needs of immigrant community members as well as the systemic causes of migration. Specifically, we ask the Senator to examine the root causes of migration and propose long-term solutions; protect the most vulnerable, especially refugees and asylum seekers; create an accessible pathway to citizenship for people without documentation; reduce spending in detention, deportation and border security, and instead look to community-based alternatives and other services that build stronger communities and economies; and work to maintain family unity in all elements of the immigration system.

For more information:

Kristen Lionetti
Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology
202-629-5918
klionetti@jesuits.org

Christopher Kerr
Ignatian Solidarity Network
216-397-2088
ckerr@ignatiansolidarity.net



Jesuit Conference
Office of Justice and Ecology

