

February 14, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
U.S. Capitol, S-230
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
U.S. Capitol, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

The faith community writes today urging all Members of Congress to oppose the Secure and Succeed Act of 2018. This bill combines the harmful provisions in the Secure Act (S.2192) and the Succeed Act (S. 1852) and would dismantle access to family reunification. Faith leaders call on all Members of Congress to reject the Secure and Succeed Act and any bill that would redefine family. It is critical that rather than this harmful bill, bipartisan legislation such as the Dream Act (S.1615) be enacted. Another bipartisan bill, the USA Act (S. 2367), is a compromise solution that would provide dreamers with a pathway to citizenship and authorize funds for data-driven border technology.

While the Secure and Succeed Act would provide a 12-year opportunity to seek U.S. citizenship for undocumented individuals who arrived in the United States before they were 16 years old, based on previous versions of this bill, it would mandate gravely disproportional consequences that would result in immediate deportation. For example, young people who need to take a year off of school or who lose their job and can't find another within a year would see their protection unfairly revoked — for situations with which many young people today are familiar. It would also force undocumented individuals to sign away their due process rights - without the ability to have their case heard before an immigration judge.

This bill would also permanently ban families from reuniting in the United States, rather than remedying existing prolonged family separation at the hands of a burdensome system. We reject the redefinition of the “nuclear” family because we know siblings, adult children, and adult parents are all critical members of a family. The bill would keep U.S. citizens from sponsoring their siblings, and would bar green card holders (lawful permanent residents) from sponsoring their children over the age of 18. It would also make it nearly impossible for U.S. citizens to reunite with their parents, by replacing the permanent visa category currently in place with a 5-year renewable visa that would require private healthcare coverage and bar work authorization and an opportunity for permanent status or citizenship. Already, family-based visas are very limited: a U.S. citizen can only sponsor their spouse, child, parent, and sibling; and a green card holder can only sponsor their spouse and child. The bill would also eliminate the Diversity Visa Lottery program, which has been essential to immigrants from all over the world, women in particular.

The Secure and Succeed Act would add \$25 billion to increase Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers and other deportation and border enforcement mechanisms. The United States already has robust border security measures in place, spending more than \$18 billion on immigration enforcement every year, 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. The dramatic militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border region has also stifled the economic vitality and overall well-being of U.S. border communities. Additional border wall construction would only harm American communities, businesses, and landowners.

Instead of the Secure and Succeed Act, the family community urges all Members of Congress to support the bipartisan Dream Act (S.1615/H.R. 3440). Another bipartisan proposal, the Uniting and Securing America (USA) Act (S. 2367/ H.R.4796), introduced by Senators McCain (R-AZ) and Coons (D-DE) and Representatives Hurd (R-TX) and Aguilar (D-CA), would offer a path to citizenship for dreamers and authorize funding for data-driven border technology. The USA Act would also address the root causes of forced migration by authorizing \$1.04 billion in fiscal year 2018 for El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala to strengthen the rule of law, combat corruption and narcotics trafficking, and address underlying causes of poverty. Children, families, women, and men are fleeing violence, gang conscription, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation in these countries. Since 2005, in Honduras alone, murders of women and girls have increased by 346 percent, and murders of men and boys have grown by 292 percent. Because of this, the USA Act is a step toward a more long-term approach to responding to conditions that compel migration.

Our faith communities urge Congress to enact a real solution that offers a pathway to citizenship for as many dreamers as possible without compromising family unity or other immigrant communities. Using the desperation of immigrant youth to push through destructive policies that undermine other immigrant and border communities violates our values and fails to promote the common good. We also ask you to remember that any legislative solution must honor the core tenets of human dignity and family unity.

Sincerely,

Adrian Dominican Sisters
African American Ministers In Action
Alliance of Baptists
American Baptist Home Mission Societies
American Friends Service Committee
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Bread for the World
Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Joseph
Christian Community Development Association
Church World Service
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Conference of the Presentation Sisters
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Conventual Franciscan Friars - Province of Our Lady of Consolation
Disciples Center for Public Witness (Disciples of Christ)
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, WI
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Advocacy Office
Faith In Public Life
Franciscan Action Network

Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, US Area
Franciscans for Justice
Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quakers)
Ignatian Solidarity Network
Institute Justice Team, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center
Interfaith Worker Justice
Islamic Society of North America
Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Ladysmith Servite Sisters
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Justice for Our Neighbors
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment
Pax Christi USA
School Sisters of St. Francis
School Sisters of Notre Dame - Central Pacific Province
School Sisters of Notre Dame Cooperative Investment Fund
Sisters of Bon Secours USA
Sisters of Charity, BVM
Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, USA Province
Sisters of St. Benedict, St. Placid Priory
Sisters of St. Dominic/Racine Dominicans
Sisters of the Presentation
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
The Episcopal Church
The Third Order Society of St. Francis, Province of the Americas
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Trinity Health
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
UURISE - Unitarian Universalist Refugee & Immigrant Services & Education