

Core values

- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity
- Improve access to a fair and humane legal immigration system
- Prioritize family unity
- End collaboration of local police with ICE
- End the detention bed quota
- Promote alternatives to detention

Current enforcement policies have torn families and communities apart, devastated our congregations and violated the rights of U.S. citizens and immigrants alike. In 2012 alone, the United States spent more than \$18 billion of taxpayers' money on the machinery of immigration enforcement, more than is spent on all other federal law enforcement agencies combined. Above all else, enforcement policies must treat all individuals with respect and dignity, as they are created in the image of God.

The IIC (Interfaith Immigration Coalition) is strongly opposed to policies that mandate, resource and encourage local police to enforce immigration law. Collaborations between local police and ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) compromise community policing efforts and cause victims and witnesses to fear the police, which makes immigrant communities targets of crime and jeopardizes community safety. States and localities should not be required to participate in immigration enforcement programs, including the forwarding of fingerprints and other biometric information to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.

Deuteronomy 10:17-18 (NIV)

ICE and local law enforcement partnerships have significantly increased immigrant arrests through programs such as 287(g), Secure Communities, and the Criminal Alien Program. These policies separate thousands of immigrants from their community and their loved ones every year. The perceived need to put these individuals behind bars has resulted in increased reliance on private prison corporations that profit on human beings in detention. *(continued on next page)*

The face of immigration

Maria and Nichole

This is Maria and her one-year-old daughter Nichole. Their suffering began when ICE officials went to the laundry where her husband, Concho, worked looking for him. He was not there.

The next morning ICE showed up at the front door of the family home banging on the door and loudly shouting Concho's name. Maria went out first and scolded them for frightening the children. She asked why they were there. They said that they wanted Concho. Marie asked, "Why? What had he done?" The ICE officers said that he was an illegal and that is why they wanted him. Maria replied, "How will I take care of the children without their father to provide for the family?"

Maria is ill with a serious thyroid problem for which she cannot get medical care. The ICE agents handed her the business cards of an immigration lawyer here in Pittsburgh and said, "Call this lawyer to help you out." They took Concho. He was in Allegheny County Jail on an immigration hold. Maria has already paid the lawyer \$8,000. The family fears he will be deported.



While steps have been taken to promote alternatives to detention, immigration detention is still excessively relied upon at great financial and moral cost. Immigration detention quintupled between 1994 and 2011 without regard to cost, space limitations, or effectiveness of available alternatives. The exponential growth of the immigration detention industry has forged an irrational and immoral mandate enacted by Congress to keep 34,000 individuals a day in immigration detention. Congress should reject this “bed quota” through the appropriations process, and provide robust resources for community-based alternatives to detention and the Department of Justice’s Legal Orientation Program for immigrant detainees.



How do current immigration bills compare to our faith principles?

Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act (S. 744/H.R. 15): Though these bills would provide a path to citizenship for many undocumented immigrants including for DREAMers and agricultural workers, it would also continue many harmful enforcement policies which tear families apart. These bills would continue collaboration between local police and immigration officials and would expand the E-verify program which has proven detrimental to migrants, employers, and citizen employees. Policy changes would improve oversight of detention centers and increase the use of alternatives to detention, but largely leave in place the current massive system for detaining immigrants.

Strengthen And Fortify Enforcement (SAFE) Act (H.R. 2278): Encourages racial profiling, mandating that law enforcement investigate, identify, arrest and detain everyone whom they suspect to be undocumented. SAFE disallows any local variation in the implementation of these programs. It harms refugees, asylum seekers and others fleeing persecution by labeling those coerced into assisting terrorist groups as “terrorists”, even if they are victims of kidnapping, extortion, and rape. The bill creates new grounds of inadmissibility and deportability for persons whom DHS “has reason to believe” were gang members, even if they were not. It expands the immigration detention system, criminalizes one-day visa overstays, and subjects anyone who transports or “harbors” an undocumented person to criminal penalties, which could include faith communities that provide assistance to individuals regardless of immigration status.



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