

March 7, 2018

Dear Members of Congress,

As Black ministers and faith leaders within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we write to you with several concerns regarding our black immigrant congregational partners and communities.

First, we strongly request that you **urge your leadership to bring to the floor legislation which will offer protections to populations such as Haitians, Hondurans, Salvadorans, Syrians, and others who have lost and are at risk soon of potentially losing Temporary Protected Status.** The American Promise Act of 2017 is one such bill in the House that offers such protections. As faith partners, family unity is a key value; and the blessing of families finds its foundation in the covenant promises of God to Abraham so that, through him, “all the families of the earth” shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). Temporary Protected Status offers a blessing that allows families to stay together, and to contribute mightily to our nation through their work in society and in our congregations. Our Haitian pastors within our Disciples of Christ families have shared with us the painful struggles being faced by Haitians in their congregations whose TPS is being eliminated. To remove such protections makes communities vulnerable; the opposite of God’s call to “uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute” (Psalm 82:3).

Second, we request that you prayerfully consider **offering your support to the Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 2018 (H.R. 5072).** We have Liberians within our Disciples family of faith who are among the over 4,000 Liberian community members at risk of being separated from their families soon, unless their ability to **continue to receive Deferred Enforced Departure (DED)** is addressed ahead of the expiration date of the end of this month of March. The Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 2018, introduced by Congressman Ellilson, continues to seek additional sponsors. To join this effort allows supporters to “encourage the fainthearted, and support the weak” (1 Thessalonians 5:14) who have benefitted from the protections of DED to shelter them from war, poverty, and the Ebola crisis in their home nation of Liberia.

Third, we implore that you speak out to **ensure that America’s long heritage of family based immigration, and the Immigrant Diversity VISA, NOT be reduced or eliminated.** The Diversity Visa, in recent years, particularly holds promise for protections of African and Asian immigrants in highest numbers. Among Africans, many have STEM and other high training; and are even more highly educated than other immigrant communities. A Pew Research Center report notes that approximately 575,000 black foreign born immigrants are likely undocumented, with a majority who arrived through family reunification visas or through the visa diversity lottery program.

Fourth, please urge your leadership to **bring protections for Dreamers to a vote without “trading off” their protections for excessive enforcement which would separate their families.** Nearly 11,000 DACA recipients are from primarily black population African and Caribbean nations, and Migration Policy Institute estimates up to 36,000 African immigrants could have been eligible for DACA protections.

Fifth, we respectfully request that you **urge the Administration to resettle the full number of refugees** he has approved for resettlement within this he number of refugees to be received. In this year, many of the resettlement agency offices which our denomination partners with have reported extensive office closures, and the concerning shuttering of African processing in some overseas centers. We urge you to use the power of your voice to communicate to the White House the critical importance of raising the number of refugees in the next year. This concern is not just at the “side” of

our faith; it is centrally important, as “we were once slaves in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 15:15), and we follow a Lord whose family was instructed by an angel to “flee to Egypt” to escape violence as a child. The reality that Refugee Council USA documents our nation has only resettled 8,757 of the 18,750 we should have resettled thus far this fiscal year is unacceptable—and we urge our nation to act morally to resettle the full 45,000 refugees promised this year, and raise the number to be resettled in the following year.

Sincerely, Disciples Ministers and Faith Leaders, as below:

Minister Mary Godfrey, Snow Hill Mt. Willing Church, Hayneville, AL.  
Rev. Cassandra Smith, Mt. Zion Christian Church, Hayneville, AL.  
Dr. Kanessa Doss, First Christian Church, Montgomery, AL.  
Rev. Dr. Nadine Burton, First Christian Church, Little Rock, AR.  
Rev. Dr. Beverly Goines, National City Christian Church, Washington, D.C.  
Rev. Terri McLellan, Shepherd Park Christian Church, Washington, D.C.  
Aaron Lee, Loudon Avenue Christian Church, Washington, D.C.  
Chaplain Orlando Scott, First Christian Church, Atlanta, GA.  
Rev. Aaron Smith, Light of the World Christian Church, Atlanta, GA.  
Rev. Sotello Long, First Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN.  
Rev. April Johnson, Light of the World Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN.  
Minister Sheila Spencer, Light of the World Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN.  
Rev. Dr. Reginald Calhoun, Sr., Temple of Christ Church, Indianapolis, IN.  
Rev. Titus James, North Heights Christian Church, Wichita, KS.  
Rev. Erin Cash, Oxford Christian Church, Georgetown, KY.  
Minister Michelle Tucker, First Christian Church, Reidsville, N.C.  
DeLois Goode, Disciples Women, First Christian Church, Reidsville, N.C.  
Jane Poteat, Disciples Women, First Christian Church, Reidsville, N.C.  
Rev. William Meyer, Firestone Park Christian Church, Akron, OH.  
Rev. Betty Green, Woodland Christian Church, Columbus, OH.  
Rev. Dr. Irvin Green, Central Christian Church, Kettering, OH.  
Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr., First Christian Church, Findlay, OH.  
Minister Teresa Vines, Minister, First Christian Church, Lemoyne, PA.  
Rev. Cushingberry, New Hope Christian Church, Beaufort, S.C.  
Rev. Dr. Lillie Matlock, Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, Memphis, TN.  
Elder Dwayne Bell, New Covenant Christian Church, Nashville, TN.  
Rev. Dr. Cristal Williams, Region of Tennessee, Nashville, TN.  
Rev. Reuben Thompson, Pastor, Community Christian Church, Fort Worth, TX.  
Ramone Burton, Garden Grove Christian Church, Houston, TX.  
Rev. Alexis Kassim, Little River UCC, Annandale, VA.  
Rev. Ciara Simonson, Springfield Christian Church, Springfield, VA.