



November 17, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We, 145 representatives of congregations of Catholic women religious gathered in Cleveland, Ohio, call on you to address the critical moral crisis facing our communities and our country. If Congress will not act to fix our broken immigration system, you must. We urge you to provide the broadest relief possible to our immigrant brothers and sisters currently forced to live in the shadows.

As people of faith, we take seriously the Gospel call to welcome the stranger and care for those in need. We are committed to the call of the Gospel to welcome the stranger and precepts of Catholic Social Teaching which remind us that the dignity of the person is at the core of our moral vision of society; that how we organize our society affects human dignity directly; and that any system that is deliberately cruel or inhumane needs to change. We are determined to end the suffering and injustice caused by our present immigration system.

Catholic sisters began coming to these shores 287 years ago as immigrants to serve immigrant populations. To this day we continue to minister to these aspiring citizens. We see the devastating effects of the brokenness of the current immigration system every day. We share the pain of mothers separated from their children and fathers who have risked their lives for love of their families.

You have it within your power to alleviate that suffering. We know you have it in your heart to keep families together and to ensure that children can thrive. The people of our nation share your concerns. The majority of Americans support bringing their neighbors out of the shadows and welcoming them into the community.

We urge you to be as bold and inclusive as possible and to implement a program of relief which includes the broadest possible class of aspiring citizens.

We hope that your actions will prevent the separation of undocumented family members of U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and DACA beneficiaries and offer protection to others who have long worked in the United States and have established strong ties with our communities including those undocumented farmworkers and all who provide essential services to our communities.

We clearly understand the limitations of administrative action and the need to ensure that the program is affordable; however, we hope that it will not unnecessarily restrict immigrants' access to higher education, health care services, and essential economic supports.

Finally, while we celebrate the potential of executive action to alleviate the suffering caused by our nation's broken immigration system, particularly in light of political inaction in Congress, it must not come at the cost of due process and access to humanitarian protection for children and families fleeing violence in Central America. We urge you to continue to support the vital protections afforded to children by TVPRA and to end family detention.

We know that ultimately it is the job of Congress to reform our broken immigration system by enacting legislation. We pledge to continue to push congressional leaders to enact comprehensive and compassionate immigration reform early in the 114th Congress.

In the meantime, we urge you to take bold and meaningful action to protect American families, strengthen our local communities, and grow the economy.

Sincerely,

Justice Conference of Women Religious

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