

**Re: Opposition to H.R. 175, the “Deport Alien Gang Members Act,” Scheduled for Markup**

*CC: House Judiciary Committee members*

Dear Chairman Jordan and Ranking Member Raskin:

The undersigned **24** faith-based organizations and congregations write to express our strong opposition to [H.R. 175](#), the “Deport Alien Gang Members Act.” Across our traditions, our organizations share the commitment to welcome the sojourner, love our neighbor, and uphold the dignity of every person. H.R. 175 betrays that call by penalizing members of our communities for assisting their neighbors. We urge you to reject it at markup and oppose it on the floor.

Our congregations have long expressed our faith through our leading role in welcoming and accompanying immigrants. As written, H.R. 175 risks criminalizing our work to welcome newcomers and imposing harsh punishment on anyone who provides shelter, transportation, or support to undocumented immigrant neighbors.

In addition to several other concerning provisions, Section 2 of the bill would define those who engage in “harboring” of newcomers to be members of a “criminal gang.” Courts have held that “harboring” includes simply offering an undocumented person a place to stay or aid in a time of need. The bill would turn religious workers into gang members overnight, criminalizing those who serve community members in need, regardless of their papers or status.

H.R. 175, gives the government extremely wide latitude to designate individuals as “criminal gang” members, and then subject them to inadmissibility and potential deportation. The bill offers no exemptions for children, trafficking victims, or those coerced into actions that fall under its broad definition of gang activity. Its provisions go far further than the version of this bill this same body declined to advance in 2017. Several measures in the bill explicitly override vital humanitarian protections like withholding of removal and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (which is designed for children who are victims of abuse, neglect or abandonment). If passed, H.R. 175 could lead to deportations even when the individuals in question face a credible fear of persecution.

H.R. 175 would limit our organizations’ ability to freely exercise our respective religious traditions by criminalizing people who work to welcome newcomers. Protecting and accompanying those who sojourn is a core tenant of each of our religious traditions. Grounded in our commitment to the sacred practice of welcoming, we urge you to reject H.R. 175 and instead pursue policies that honor the inherent dignity and value of all of our neighbors.

Sincerely,

**National Organizations:**

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)  
Church World Service  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Region  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
The United Methodist General Board of Church and Society  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice  
World Relief

**Local and Regional Organizations and Congregations:**

Convento Camerino

Estrella del Paso

Franciscan Action Network Justice Circle Northern California Bay Area

New Mexico Conference of Churches

New Mexico Franciscan Justice Circle

Normal Heights United Methodist Church

Phoenix Franciscan Justice Circle

San Antonio Mennonite Church

Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

Trinity House Catholic Worker

Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus Parish

Julian of Norwich Mission