

# The Riverside Church



*Interdenominational • Interracial • International*

June 14, 2009

Dear President Obama:

This morning in worship at The Riverside Church in the City of New York we observed Immigrant Sunday, with particular attention to the well-being of children. We heard about the many ways that children are suffering due to broken U.S. immigration policies and practices.

Comprehensive, humane, fair immigration reform is needed urgently to end the suffering of children and to establish an immigration system that works for America. Such reforms are urgently needed this year! Whether they are enacted separately or as part of comprehensive reform, we support:

- The Child Citizen Protection Act, H.R. 182, which seeks to protect the interests of the 3.1 million U.S.-citizen children who have at least one undocumented parent. It would allow immigration judges to rule against deportation of a parent when it is against the best interest of the child.
- The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, S. 729 and H.R. 1751. It would benefit the approximately 65,000 students who graduate from U.S. high schools each year who have been in the United States more than five years and who face limited prospects for completing their education or working legally in the U.S. because they were brought here at a young age without immigration documents. The DREAM Act would allow these children to pursue a path to legal status and eventual citizenship, thus gaining access to their dreams.
- The Reuniting Families Act, S. 1085 and H.R. 2709. Because of inefficiencies in the U.S. immigration system, naturalized citizens and lawful permanent residents are waiting up to 24 years to be reunited legally with an immediate family member. This act would reduce lengthy backlogs and would go a long way toward ending the tragedy of broken families – among them children living without a parent, or in some cases, both parents.
- The Uniting American Families Act, S. 424, which would end discrimination against LGBT families. The law currently does not recognize same-gender permanent partnerships for immigration purposes, even those who have celebrated a state-sanctioned marriage. Under the proposed bill, same-gender partners would have to meet the same exacting standards required for opposite-gender partners seeking immigration benefits.
- The Immigration Oversight and Fairness Act, H.R. 1215, which would ensure that children apprehended by the Department of Homeland Security are treated appropriately and humanely.

Mr. President, we are heartened that you will be meeting soon with members of Congress to discuss immigration reform. Mindful of the Christian teaching that as we've done to "the least of these" we've done to Jesus, we hope you will be articulating your support for measures that protect children. Thank you, Mr. President.

Signed:

Print name and full address:

CC: My Senators and Representative  
DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano