

## June 2018: Take Action to Protect Immigrants!

### Why is June 2018 a critical time for United Methodists to take action to protect immigrants?

Right now, there are multiple legislative proposals on immigration being considered in the US House of Representatives. These proposals would impact **DACA recipients**, commonly referred to as “Dreamers,” and their families.

### What is DACA and what is the current legislative opportunity for advocacy?

DACA is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that allows undocumented immigrant young people the opportunity to go to school, work, and thrive in the US. In September 2017 the Trump Administration announced its plan to end DACA. In March 2018, the termination of DACA was supposed to go into effect—but did not, due to court challenges to the termination’s legality. This has left nearly 800,000 DACA recipients and their families in limbo about their financial security, their future, and their ability to be in this country. Tens of thousands of DACA recipients have lost their status and are eligible for deportation already.

To end this situation, we are asking the US Congress to support a legislative solution that **protects DREAMERS and immigrant families**. This month the House of Representatives has the opportunity to support DACA recipients by voting for **legislation that focuses on offering DACA recipients a pathway to citizenship**. There are bills being proposed, such as the “Goodlatte bill,” that will cause more harm to Dreamers and their families, and to immigrant communities.

The United Methodist Church joins the larger immigrant justice community in our message: *We want to see Congress support legislation that provides a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients and protects immigrant families!*

### What is going on with the Farm Bill and how is it connected to DACA?

The Farm Bill is legislation that authorizes agriculture and nutrition programs. This year, a group of members of Congress (the Freedom Caucus) is withholding their votes on the Farm Bill until action is taken on immigration legislation. And, as noted above, unfortunately some of the legislation being proposed is very harmful to immigrants. This year’s version of the Farm Bill is also threatening: it would severely hurt struggling individuals and families who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly referred to as food stamps. SNAP is the most efficient and effective anti-hunger program in the US providing a modest benefit averaging \$1.40 per person per meal. This year’s Farm Bill would add eligibility requirements and penalties for some SNAP recipients – reducing or eliminating benefits for an estimated 2 million men, women, and children.

### What do we as United Methodists say? What can we as United Methodists do?

The Church cares deeply and has a clear call to address the immigration crisis as well as support hunger programs like SNAP. We are hearing that both of these issues will come up in sequence (immigration first and then the Farm Bill) around **June 22-25 in the House of Representatives**. We need United Methodists to TAKE ACTION on these issues!

Call your Representative at (202) 224-3121, enter your zip code to be connected to your Representative, and tell them that *we want Congress to pass immigration legislation narrowly focused on a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and protecting immigrants!* And for the Farm Bill, our message is to *Vote “No” on HR 2 (the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018) and oppose efforts to reduce or eliminate access to SNAP benefits for struggling families! We want Congress to protect the SNAP program!*

We have an opportunity RIGHT NOW to make a difference and take a stand to:

- 1. Protect DACA recipients and their families!**
- 2. Protect Struggling Families by protecting SNAP!**

# Family Separation

The legislation coming before Congress on June 22-25, 2018 is not about the family separations that recently grabbed headlines; however, advocacy is needed on this issue too! Some background: in early May 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a new “zero tolerance” policy of arresting every adult who shows up at the US border illegally, including those seeking asylum, and separating them from their children. These children are taken into custody by the US government. Our partners at the Coalition for Human Needs report that,

“From May 6-May 19, 638 parents traveling with 658 children were separated, because of the Trump Administration's new "zero tolerance" policy - arresting every parent crossing the border, without regard to national and international standards for the treatment of asylum-seekers. Parents are taken into custody, and children, some very young, are placed in the custody of HHS' Office of Refugee Resettlement - they often do not know how to contact each other. This is an abrupt expansion of Trump's family separation policy; many families previously torn apart have been separated for months. Those of us who advocate for children and families must stand against this cruel policy.” Right now there are over 10,000 immigrant children in US custody.

## What The United Methodist Church Says

“We oppose immigration policies that separate family members from each other or that include detention of families with children, and we call on local churches to be in ministry with immigrant families.” – Social Principles ¶162 H.

## What You Can Do

There are many calls to action and many ways to engage. These are just a few. Find resources and more at [bit.ly/familiesbelongtogether](http://bit.ly/familiesbelongtogether).

1. **Use social media to raise awareness about this horrific practice.** Tweet at @realDonaldTrump and @SecNielsen. See resources at [familiesbelongtogether.org](http://familiesbelongtogether.org).
2. **Issue a press statement and speak out publicly** about the need to keep families together. **Local op-eds** are particularly helpful.
3. **Help drive calls to Congress.** Call (202) 224-3121. Urge your Members of Congress to use Congress’ oversight authority to stop separating families. We must ensure the rights of children and parents are respected, and our legal system is allowed to work in the way Congress intended -- to ensure those needing protection are able to find permanent safety and that our families and communities are strong and successful.

Four requests for Members of Congress:

1. Push for an **end to the practice of separating and jailing families**. Call on President Trump, DHS Secretary Nielsen, and Attorney General Sessions to end family separation and detention through social media, letters, appropriations requirements, and in Congressional hearings.
2. Support an effort to **defund family separation in the appropriations context** and support decreases in funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the U.S. Attorneys’ Offices within the Department of Justice.
3. Visit CBP facilities, detention centers, and federal courts at the border -- **speak firsthand to parents** who have been separated from their children and hear their stories.
4. **Consider legislation** that would protect family values at the border; help separated children; and give children a fair day in court. Also consider appropriations legislation and report language that would prevent blanket and inhumane family separation practices, and track when, where, and how often family separation occurs.