

June ___, 2008

Honorable Members of Congress
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of the House of Representatives,

We, the undersigned faith-based leaders and organizations, express our firm support of the Child Citizen Protection Act, H.R. 1176, sponsored by Representative Serrano (NY-16). As members of a variety of faith traditions, we call on Congress to enact this important piece of legislation that could keep families together and strengthen U.S. communities.

In 1996, mandatory deportation for many non-citizens – lawful permanent residents included – became a part of U.S. immigration law and judges were stripped of any and all discretion to rule in the best interest of a child whose family is involved in immigration proceedings. This policy has denied families the opportunity to plead their cases and has proven detrimental to the well-being of thousands of children, including children who are U.S. citizens. Since 1996, 1.6 million spouses and children have been left behind to cope after a family member has been forcibly deported.

The Child Citizen Protection Act seeks to return judicial discretion to immigration judges so they can take into account the well-being of a U.S. citizen child when determining if their non-citizen parent should be forcibly deported. If enacted, this legislation could have a significant impact on families comprised of both citizens and non-citizens, as judges could decide to let undocumented parents remain in the United States with their children.

Fifteen percent of all families in the United States include at least one non-citizen parent and a U.S. citizen child. We recognize that parental involvement is critical to the development of children, as a close parent-child relationship increases the likelihood of a child's academic success, physical health, and emotional well-being. The Child Citizen Protection Act would have the potential to keep families together and allow children to grow and develop into thoughtful and contributing adult citizens.

This legislation would also positively impact U.S. communities overall. By restoring judicial discretion, The Child Citizen Protection Act would protect the economic contributions of non-citizens, as well as the future contributions of their children, as they are able to be nurtured by their parents in a stable and unified family environment.

As faith communities, we value family unity and believe that the well-being of children should be taken into account during immigration and deportation proceedings. We urge all members of Congress to cosponsor and support The Child Citizen Protection Act to restore judicial discretion to protect family unity and the well-being of the nation's children.

Respectfully,

American Baptist Churches USA
American Islamic Congress
American Jewish Committee
Casa de Esperanza
Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program
Christian Reformed Church in North American, Office of Social Justice
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
Hindu American Foundation
Hispanic Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform
Irish Apostolate USA
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference
National Ministries, American Baptist Churches USA
NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Standing For Truth Foundation
The Episcopal Church
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church
Union for Reform Judaism