

Letter from 127 Arizona Faith Leaders

April 29, 2016

Dear Arizona Senators and Representatives,

As faith leaders from many different traditions, we write with grave concern regarding the numerous anti-refugee and anti-immigrant bills under consideration in the Arizona State Legislature. As people of faith, we look first to our common values rooted in our sacred texts that remind us to love our neighbor and welcome the sojourner among us. As Leviticus 19:34 (CE) reminds us:

“Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself, because you were immigrants in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.”

Yet for the last decade, Arizona has been plagued with the most unwelcoming and discriminatory policies in the entire country. The pinnacle of these harsh laws was in 2010 when SB 1070 passed. This law, which promotes racial profiling, has stained our state’s reputation and caused a boycott that continues to this day. An independent research center found that several months after SB 1070 passed, \$45 million was lost from canceled conventions, a ripple effect that cost the state an estimated 2,876 jobs and \$253 million in economic output.¹ The economic damage was so tremendous, sixty CEOs of businesses came out to stop more anti-immigrant legislation from moving forward in 2011. Since that time, the legislature has rightly steered clear of highly divisive laws that unfairly targeting immigrants and that lead to highly contentious litigation.

Immigrants and refugees offer great contributions to our communities and to our economy, but more importantly, they are children of God and our brothers and sisters that deserve dignity and respect. As people of faith, we are called to walk alongside the most vulnerable among us. This is why we are united in opposing the current proposed legislation in the Arizona Senate that would once again discriminate against immigrants and refugees in immoral and unjust ways.

[SB 1377](#) would mandate the strictest sentencing for undocumented immigrants who have committed even minor crimes, and would make them ineligible for probation no matter their conduct. Should this become law, strict sentencing also could apply to humanitarian aid workers or members of congregations providing assistance to undocumented immigrants. People of faith have joined the growing chorus of voices, and political leaders from both parties, in calling for a reexamination of mandatory sentencing laws that have fueled mass incarceration, wasting lives and taxpayer resources. This bill heads us in the wrong direction, imposing lengthy and inflexible jail terms on non-violent offenders.

[HB 2223](#) would force local police to collaborate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Such legislation would undermine community policing practices and compromise broader public safety, as victims of crimes will be more fearful to go to the police. Additionally, HB 2223 aims to take away the potential for a municipality to have their own identification program. This

¹ <https://www.aclu.org/economic-impact-arizona-style-sb-1070-copycat-legislation>

is unfortunate, as identification requirements increasingly gate-keep almost every aspect of daily life; without the right form of ID, individuals may not be able to open a bank account or even cash a check, see a doctor at a hospital, register their child for school, file a complaint with the police department, or even collect a package from the post office.

[HB 2370](#) would prohibit the use of Arizona state resources to serve refugees, unaccompanied children, and other non-U.S. citizens. It would not only severely restrict refugee resettlement in Arizona, but also prevent refugees and children fleeing violence and persecution from seeking safety. Refugees are already the most scrutinized individuals to travel to the United States, undergoing name, biographic and bio-metric checks; medical screenings; forensic testing of documents; DNA testing for family reunification cases; and in-person interviews by the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of State, Department of Defense, and National Counterterrorism Center. This bill does nothing to make communities safer, and instead is designed to turn away the most vulnerable refugees and unaccompanied children fleeing extreme forms of physical and sexual violence.

As faith leaders, we work to uplift and support immigrants and refugees in our midst. We support policies and programs that help build welcoming communities, such as sanctuary cities and municipal identification programs. Excluding those who are in their most dire need simply because of their national origin or faith background is immoral and unjust.

We want to see Arizona become a state that welcomes immigrants, refugees, and all people. Instead of passing more mean-spirited, anti-immigrant or anti-refugee laws, we should be working to repeal SB 1070 and pushing forward with policies that recognize the great contributions immigrants and refugees bring to our communities, our congregations, our economy, and our lives. Please help stop these immoral and unjust laws. Vote no on SB 1377, HB 2223, HB 2370, and any other proposal attacking refugees and immigrants.

Sincerely,

Reverend Brady Abel, United Church of Sun City

Father Richard Aguilar, Episcopal Diocese of Arizona

Faith Leader Amy Altshuler, Anti-Defamation League - AZ

Reverend Rosemary Anderson, Tempe First United Methodist Church

Rabbi Batsheva Appel, Temple Emanu-El

Pastor Don Benton, Scottsdale United Methodist Church

Faith Leader K Kay Bircher, Roman Catholic

Reverend Doug Bland, Tempe Community Christian Church

Sister Mary Richardine Blue, Sisters of Mercy

Pastor Emery Boepple, United Churches Fellowship- UCC

Reverend Kate Bradsen, St. Andrew's, Tucson

Reverend Sherry Brady, First United Methodist Church, Safford, AZ

Reverend Sandra Britton, St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center

Faith Leader Lori Bryant, First Christian Church, DOC, Tucson

Reverend Joyce Buekers, The Harp Foundation/Church of the Beatitudes
Rabbi Erica Burech, Congregation Merkaz Ha-Iyr
Reverend Andy Burnette, Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Father Sean Carroll, Kino Border Initiative
Rabbi Mari Chernow, Temple Chai
Rabbi Samuel Cohon, Temple Emanu-El
Faith Leader Carol Consalvo, National Council of Jewish Women
Faith Leader Nancy DeArman, FIRST Christian Church
Faith Leader Paul DeArman, First Christian Church
Reverend Inge Detweiler, Rincon UCC
Pastor Jim Dew, Santa Cruz Lutheran Church
Reverend Mary Alice Do, First Christian Church Tucson
Faith Leader Arlene Dominguez, Shadow Rock UCC
Reverend Nancy Elsenheimer, Ktizo United Church of Christ
Faith Leader Adam Estle, Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding
Reverend Glenn Farley, Sedona Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Reverend John Fife, Southside Presbyterian Church
Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix
Faith Leader Monica Friedl, St Thomas More Catholic Newman Center
Reverend Matthew Funke Crary, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Green Valley in Amado
Reverend Joanne Giannino, Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Rabbi Sarah Grafstein, Spirit of the desert
Reverend Ailsa Guardiola Gonzalez, First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Tucson
Reverend Jerry Haas, United Methodist Church
Sister Marilyn Jean Hagedorn, Congregation of the Humility of Mary
Reverend Alison Harrington, Southside Presbyterian Church
Faith Leader Susan Harris, First Christian Church (Disciples)
Reverend Kenneth Heintzeman, Shadow Rock United Church of Christ
Reverend Christiane Heyde, Mountain Vista UU Congregation
Reverend Pamela Hines, West Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Reverend Edward Hunt, Presbytery de Cristo
Reverend Agustin Jimenez, Santa Clara United Methodist Church
Reverend Dr. Elizabeth B. Johnson, Shepherd of the Hills United Church of Christ –
Congregational

Reverend Teresa Jones, Sacred Space
Rabbi Elana Kanter, The New Shul
Reverend Kenneth Kennon, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Sister Mary Kirkhoff, Medical Mission Sisters
Pastor Jack Knox, Mennonite
Sister Leonette Kochan, OSF, Catholic Diocese of Tucson
Rabbi Bonnie Koppell, Temple Chai
Father Robert Kose, Casa San Jose
Reverend Robert Koth, First Congregational United Church of Christ Phoenix
Rabbi Robert Kravitz
Sister Vera Lander, Pima Friends Meeting (Quakers)
Reverend Linda Lawrence, Sky Island Unitarian Universalist Church
Reverend Eric Ledermann, University Presbyterian Church, Tempe
Reverend Kate Lehman, St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Community
Faith Leader Sheryl Leigh-Davault, Shadow Rock UCC
Rabbi John A. Linder, Temple Solel
Faith Leader Nancy Linthicum, The Good Shepherd UCC
Reverend Donald Longbottom, Church of the Beatitudes UCC
Reverend Dr. William Lyons, Designated Conference Minister, Southwest Conference United
Church Of Christ
Sister Eileen Mahony, Sisters of St. Agnes
Sister Jean Mariani, Santacatalina Catholic Parish
Faith Leader Johnny Martin, Sun Devils Are Better Together
Deacon Nancy J. Martin, University Presbyterian Church
Reverend Tom Martinez, Desert Palm UCC
Reverend Randy J. Mayer, The Good Shepherd United Church of Christ
Sister Margaret Mary McBride, RSM, Sisters of Mercy
Sister Maura McCarthy, La Luz Hispana
Reverend Delle McCormick, Rincon Congregational United Church of Christ
Reverend Lisa McDaniel-Hutchings, Unitarian Universalist Justice Arizona Network
Faith Leader Janet McNally, St. Andrew the Apostle Faith Community
Reverend Nancy Meister, Grace St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Sister Mary Joyce Moeller, Congregation of Divine Providence
Faith Leader Michael Nealen, Most Holy Trinity Parish

Faith Leader Ann Nichols, Moderator, First Christian Church
Sister Noelle O'Shea, sisters of St Joseph of Carondelet (CSJ)
Father Ronald Oakham, St. Cyril of Alexandria parish
Sister Donna Otter, Sisters of St. Joseph
Sister Sr. Ellen Pachmayer, Santa Cruz Catholic School
Reverend James Pennington, First Congregational United Church of Christ - Phoenix
Faith Leader Karen Perez, Most Holy Trinity Parish
Reverend Ron Phares, Mountain Vista UU Congregation
Reverend David Ragan, Beatitudes Campus
Reverend Kirk Reed, Catalina United Methodist Church
Reverend Tina Marie Rees, First United Methodist Church of Gilbert
Sister Ruth Reischman, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
Sister Carla Riach, San Xavier Mission
Faith Leader Steve Rickson, Most Holy Trinity Parish
Reverend Susan Ringler, Guardian Angels Catholic Community
Sister Eve Rosenberg, Friends Southwest Center
Sister Claudia Rushlow, Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill
Father Rosemary Sampon, Medical Mission Sistets
Reverend Leah Sandwell-Weiss, St Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church, Tucson AZ
Reverend Kristina Schlabach, Shalom Mennonite Fellowship
Sister Mary Sears, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Faith Leader Usama Shami, Islamic Community Center of Phoenix
Rabbi Dean Shapiro, Temple Emanuel of Tempe
Imam Ahmad Shqeirat, Tempe Islamic Center
Reverend Terry Sims, Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Surprise, Arizona
Reverend Bart Smith, St. Mark's Presbyterian
Faith Leader Harry Smith, Green Valley Community Church --UMC
Reverend Elizabeth Smith, de Cristo Presbytery
Faith Leader Kirk Smith, Bishop of the Diocese of Arizona
Reverend Tina Squire, Hospice Chaplain
Faith Leader Emrys Staton, UU Congregation of Phoenix
Reverend Anne Strong, St Philips Episcopal Church
Faith Leader Luzdy Stucky, Mennonite Central Committee West Coast
Reverend Stephen Talmage, Grand Canyon Synod ELCA

Reverend Erin Tamayo, Presbytery of the Grand Canyon

Reverend Neva Thorn Perdue, Calvary United Methodist Church

Faith Leader Elaine Trask, Scottsdale Congregational United Church of Christ

Faith Leader Ellen Vellenga, St. Andrew's PCUSA, Tucson

Faith Leader Jo Vredenburg, Justice and Witness Ministry Coordinator, Desert Palm United
Church of Christ, Tempe, AZ

Reverend Kellie Walker, Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Faith Leader Joanne Welter, San Augustine Cathedral

Reverend Walter Wieder, Unitarian Universalist of Surprise

Reverend David Wilkinson, Retired United Methodist Clergy person

Reverend Mary Workman, First Christian Church, Tucson

Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz, Valley Beit Midrash

Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz, Uri L'Tzedek

Sister Alice Zachmann, SSND