



Remarks from Mr. Jason Adkins, MCC Executive Director

Press Conference: Immigration Advocates Discuss SCOTUS Oral Arguments on DACA & DAPA

April 18, 2016, Minneapolis

Opening Prayer

“When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” – Leviticus 19:33-34

Statement

We are here today to affirm and highlight the call from many in the faith community, who sometimes disagree with each other on matters of public policy, but vigorously agree that the U.S. Supreme Court should uphold the legality of DAPA and expansion of DACA.

Twenty-four Christian religious organizations submitted a [friend of the court brief in today's case](#). This included the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and seven other Catholic organizations and religious orders, but also Church World Service, the Mennonite Central Committee, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, and the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, all arguing that the Secretary has the legal discretion to implement the deferred action programs and not remove undocumented persons for a designated period of time for humanitarian and other reasons. The religious organizations' brief submitted to the Supreme Court highlights the government's legitimate use of deferred action because of its interest in maintaining stable families, which is an integral consideration in the application of immigration law.

Faith plays a significant role in the lives of immigrants and their families. The religious communities advising the court today have a strong interest in, and derive benefits, spiritual and otherwise, from assisting those in the immigrant community. Indeed, as the brief notes, immigrants and their families bless those communities with their witness, concern for each other, and contributions to the diversity of our communities. Faith-based organizations know first-hand the challenges experienced by immigrant families and shared those with the court in their brief, particularly the importance of keeping families together.

As the faith communities note, family separation can cause great emotional, economic, and social harm to families. Pre-deportation detention traumatizes families by putting great distance and barriers

between people, or otherwise causing immigrants to disappear once they have been picked up by ICE. With no information or services, family must rely heavily on their social networks for information. Deportation, when it does occur, has serious adverse effects on families, including a permanent change in family structure and in extreme cases family dissolution. In 2011, for example, more than 5,100 U.S. citizen children were living in foster care after a parent's detention or deportation

By contrast, the DAPA and DACA programs prevent immediate and long-lasting damage to children. By disrupting the essential and secure base that a family provides, detention and deportation of parents puts their children at greater risk for psychological and emotional distress, including depression, anxiety, and withdrawal. The damage inflicted by family instability as a result of immigration action can also have long term effects on the cognitive and physical development in children. Facing the possibility of deportation, many immigrants have shied away from jobs and other social opportunities necessary to foster family flourishing. It's time to bring people out of the shadows.

The religious organizations have focused their argument on family stability because the family is the central unity of society and its protection and well-being should be the number one concern of public policy. It is no accident that in his [recent apostolic exhortation](#) on the challenges facing the family, Pope Francis highlighted the importance of protecting migrant families. He stated: "Dedication and concern shown to migrants...is a test of our commitment to show mercy in welcoming others and to help the vulnerable to be fully a part of our communities.... We should remember the Holy Family of Nazareth who had to flee to Egypt to escape violence and persecution. This experience continues to afflict many refugees and families who in our day feel helpless and neglected, and whose journey often puts lives at risk, traumatizes people and destabilizes families."

For these reasons, many in the faith community hope that the Court rules for the federal government. But however the court rules today, the only lasting solution to the humanitarian challenge of the 11 million undocumented persons living in the United States is comprehensive federal immigration reform that puts people on a path to citizenship. The Catholic Church repeats our call today for our federal elected officials to focus on the lives of each of those 11 million people and work together to determine how we can create a new policy that protects the dignity of each of those persons and serves the common good. Thank you.