TITLE: Support of Sanctuary Churches and Against Immigration Raids in Hawai‘i

SPONSOR: Salvador Tinajero

BE IT RESOLVED THAT this the 57th Annual Meeting of the Convention of the Diocese of Hawai‘i affirms the sacred role of churches as sanctuaries of refuge, compassion, and justice, and commits this Diocese to standing with immigrant and refugee communities who face fear and persecution from unjust immigration enforcement practices;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Convention affirms the actions of The Episcopal Church joining with ecumenical partners in the lawsuit to ensure “sanctuary” status of religious institutions, as the Most Reverend Sean Rowe, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church stated in his July 3, 2025 letter to the Church: “Churches like ours, protected by the First Amendment and practiced in galvanizing people of goodwill, may be some of the last institutions capable of resisting this administration’s overreach and recklessness. To do so faithfully, we must see beyond the limitations of our tradition and respond not in partisan terms, but as Christians who seek to practice our faith fully in a fee and fair democracy.” (https://religionnews.com/2025/07/03/once-the-church-of-presidents-the-episcopal-church-must-now-be-an-engine-of-resistance/)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Convention denounces the ongoing immigration raids in Hawai‘i as violations of human dignity and constitutional rights, noting their devastating impacts on families, schools, and workplaces, and particularly on ~~Big Island~~ Hawai’i Island coffee farms where more than 100 workers have been deported, causing fear, family separation, and severe economic harm;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Convention condemns the expansion of the federal 287(g) program and other agreements that deputize local police as immigration enforcement agents, recognizing that these programs enable racial profiling, wrongful detentions, and what faith partners have rightly called acts of “domestic terrorism” when ICE agents operate masked, unmarked, and without accountability;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Diocese of Hawai‘i urges all congregations to prayerfully discern offering sanctuary ministries—including accompaniment, safe spaces, advocacy, and prophetic public witness—so that all people may live without fear and continue to access essential services;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Secretary of this Convention shall communicate this resolution to the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Public Policy Network, and interfaith partners in Hawai‘i, affirming our shared commitment to resist the weaponization of immigration law and to love our neighbors as Christ commands. “Welcoming the stranger is not a political act—it’s a sacred obligation.” --Julia Ayala-Harris, President of the House of Deputies of The Episcopal Church. (https://www.episcopalchurch.org/publicaffairs/episcopal-church-joins-religious-freedom-lawsuit-challenging-ice-enforcement-actions-in-churches/)

RATIONALE/EXPLANATION

Immigration enforcement actions in Hawai‘i are escalating. For example, on Hawai‘i Island, ICE raids have targeted farms, homes, and even schools—detaining workers, parents, and children. Farmers in Ka‘ū and Kona report losing 20–30% of their harvests as trusted pickers are deported or too afraid to work, despite this year’s bumper crop. The Honolulu Star-Advertiser has reported that, as of May 2025, ICE has taken people on three of the Hawaiian Islands. Families now hide in their homes, children fear losing their parents, and entire communities live in fear.

Nationally, ICE has expanded unaccountable enforcement practices, including raids by agents in masks and without identification—tactics that other denominations, including the United Church of Christ, have condemned as “domestic terrorism”

These actions undermine constitutional rights, violate international human rights norms, and contradict Christian teaching that all people are made in God’s image (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 25:35).

This resolution affirms the Diocese of Hawai‘i’s Gospel call to stand with the vulnerable, resist policies that weaponize fear, and ensure that our churches remain sanctuaries of refuge, justice, and aloha for all.