10 Reforms Needed to Help Solve the Immigration Problem

Adapted from resources on the American Friends Service Committee website (https://afsc.org/)

1. Prioritize family unity

Families are the basic unit of strong communities. Unified families bring stability to individual households and strengthen neighborhoods and communities. As we reform our laws to prioritize keeping families together, our communities will grow healthier and stronger. Reforming the family visa system will allow families to stay together throughout the legal process and reduce the undocumented immigration of family members wishing to unite with their loved ones.

2. Create a process that leads to legal status and citizenship

A reformed immigration system should include a pathway to eventual citizenship for all who enter the country legally on immigrant visas. It is not in the interest of the United States as a democracy to design a structure that recognizes something less than citizenship for some of its permanent residents. Any meaningful reform should also include a fair process that allows existing undocumented immigrants and their families the opportunity to earn lawful permanent residency with a pathway to citizenship.

3. Improve access to the legal immigration system

When immigrants are held in prolonged limbo at the hands of the legal immigration system, our communities cannot flourish. We seek naturalization and citizenship procedures that are affordable, accessible, and expedient with respect to due process. Expanding visa availability, increasing the number of ports of entry, allocating resources for more immigration attorneys, and eliminating application backlogs will reduce the undue burden on immigrants traversing the legal immigration system.

4. Protect all workers and reduce exploitation

Migrant workers are an asset to our country, contributing necessary skills and labor for our communities and economy. Equality demands policies that decrease immigrants' vulnerabilities to exploitation and reduce unfair or discriminatory hiring and firing practices. The federal government should establish a mechanism to determine each year the need for additional workers from outside the United States. These legal avenues should be designed to avoid undercutting wages and job opportunities for people already in the country, and should allow new immigrants to bring their families with them

5. Emphasize community safety

Separating local policing from immigration enforcement promotes the safety of the whole community. Immigration is constitutionally a federal matter, to be enforced by federal authorities. Layers of state and local laws only confuse an already overly complex system, deny civil rights to citizens and non-citizens, and frustrate efforts to find common-sense solutions to fix our broken immigration system.

6. Protect human rights in enforcement practices and border policies Federal policies should treat individuals with dignity and integrity. Interior enforcement and border policies must reflect these values and protect human life, tribal sovereignty and sacred sites, and environmental standards. Future legislation should prevent and hold Department of Homeland

Security, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection, to account for practices that needlessly threaten lives and separate family members during the deportation process.

7. Reform detention policies

Those of us who accompany or represent immigrants in detention facilities have witnessed firsthand the toll incarceration takes on those detained, their families, and our communities. Our policies should reduce the use of detention, improve existing detention facility conditions, and promote the use of community-based alternatives to detention instead. Vulnerable individuals, such as children and asylum seekers, should be sheltered in non-restrictive environments and never in detention facilities.

8. Protect vulnerable populations in the U.S. and abroad

All those fleeing conflict and persecution, including human trafficking survivors and other vulnerable populations, deserve the opportunity to pursue safe, productive, and fruitful lives. Strengthening our legal asylum processes and refugee resettlement program is essential to ensure proper protection. We must ensure that domestic policies do not force individuals to return them to deadly or dangerous conditions or to be handed over to persons who seek to exploit them. All people have the right to migrate, as well as the right to flourish in their home countries.

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