

**KAM Isaiah Israel Congregation  
Board of Directors**

**Position Statement on Undocumented Immigrants  
(Submitted by the Social Justice Committee)**

**Adopted by the Board of Directors, May 8, 2017**

**Background**

Both Jewish values and Jewish history compel us to treat aliens in our midst with justice and compassion. The Torah teaches us: “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall do him no wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19:33).

The Jewish immigrant experience in America includes a period when many Jews were considered “illegal aliens.” Federal legislation enacted in 1921 and 1924 dramatically lowered the influx of immigrants and established strict quotas that severely restricted immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. As a result, many immigrants sought to evade the new restrictions and enter the country illegally through Mexico and Canada, and this included tens of thousands of Jewish immigrants.

The Reform Jewish Movement has long supported fair and compassionate immigration policies. In 1985, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations — now the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) — adopted a resolution in support of undocumented refugees from Central America. In 2007, the URJ endorsed comprehensive immigration reform, which included effective and humane border security, as well as allowing undocumented immigrants to apply for legal status and providing for pathways to earned citizenship. In March 2017, the URJ adopted a resolution on protecting undocumented immigrants at risk of deportation. The resolution celebrates “the many ways in which Reform congregations are responding to fix what is broken in the U.S. immigration system and to support undocumented immigrants who are in need.”

*Current Policy Issues*

The Pew Research Center estimates that there were 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. in 2015, down from a peak of 12.2 million in 2007. Many of these unauthorized immigrants have lived, worked, and paid taxes here for decades. An estimated 3.9 million school children are U.S.-born citizens who have at least one undocumented parent.

The Trump administration has launched a campaign to aggressively enforce federal immigration laws through apprehension, detention, and deportation of undocumented immigrants, regardless of whether they have committed serious crimes. In two implementation memos issued in February 2017, the Department of Homeland Security widened the definition of “criminal aliens” who are a priority for deportation, eliminated privacy protections for people who are not U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents, and expanded the use of

“expedited removal,” which bypasses due process protections such as a hearing before an immigration judge.

These extreme measures intensify fear and mistrust within immigrant communities, encourage racial profiling, and lead to the breakup of families, including the separation of children from parents. The new enforcement policies can also hamper cooperation with local law enforcement and the judicial system. The chief justice of the California Supreme Court has sharply criticized recent instances where federal enforcement agents have gone into courthouses to find and arrest undocumented immigrants. In a letter to the U.S. Attorney General and Secretary of Homeland Security, she expressed concern that this practice could undermine public trust and confidence in the state court system: “Crime victims, victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence, witnesses to crimes who are aiding law enforcement, limited-English speakers, unrepresented litigants, and children and families all come to our courts seeking justice and due process of law.”

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, initiated by the Obama administration in June 2013, protects young undocumented immigrants (who entered the U.S. before age 16) from deportation and authorizes to get work permits for renewable two-year periods. More than 750,000 young people are DACA participants, and many of them have attended or are attending college. The University of Chicago has joined colleges and universities across the nation in a public statement of support for undocumented students. Although the Trump administration has not rescinded DACA, the program’s future remains in doubt. Moreover, an individual’s DACA status can be revoked; some DACA participants have been detained and at least one has been deported.

### *Sanctuary Movement*

The sanctuary movement in the U.S. began in the 1980s as an effort by religious and immigrant rights groups to provide safe havens for refugees from Central America. Today the sanctuary movement is committed to protect and support undocumented immigrants who are facing unjust deportation. The current sanctuary movement encompasses a range of actions that include offering protected living space in places of worship; providing legal assistance, material support, and other services to those at risk of deportation; public advocacy and education; and the practice of “sanctuary cities.”

The term “sanctuary city” refers to a local government that has adopted policies to prevent or limit cooperation in the enforcement of federal immigration laws. Sanctuary jurisdictions typically decline federal requests to detain undocumented immigrants. Chicago’s “Welcoming City Ordinance” protects undocumented immigrants from unjust detention or deportation by carefully circumscribing the City’s role in investigating immigration status or participating in the enforcement of federal immigrant laws. Cook County has a similar “Fair and Equal County for Immigrants” ordinance.

An Executive Order, issued in January, directs that federal funds be withheld from jurisdictions that fail to comply with federal immigration laws. The U.S. Justice Department recently sent letters to nine local jurisdictions across the country, including the City of Chicago and Cook County, warning that they must provide proof of compliance with federal

immigration law or risk losing grants for local law enforcement. San Francisco, Seattle, and several other local governments have filed lawsuits challenging the Executive Order. A federal judge in California has issued a nationwide preliminary injunction that blocks implementation of penalties against sanctuary jurisdictions.

## **Resolution**

THEREFORE, the Board of Directors of KAM Isaiah Israel Congregation resolves that:

1. We support the Union for Reform Judaism's "[Resolution on Protecting Individuals at Risk of Deportation from the United States.](#)"
2. We oppose unjust and arbitrary apprehension, detention, and deportation of undocumented immigrants.
3. We commend efforts to protect and support participants in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.
4. We support efforts by the City of Chicago and Cook County to protect undocumented immigrants from unjust detention or deportation.
5. We endorse the principles and practices of offering sanctuary and other forms of support to undocumented immigrants who are resisting unjust deportation.
6. We remain open to the possibility of offering sanctuary on own premises, under appropriate circumstances.