

# *Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Immigration Policy Principles*

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## **Vision:**

Increasingly, immigrants to the United States face a culture of unwelcome: reduced public services, strengthened border security, increased workplace raids and infamous backlogs in visa processing. For undocumented immigrants, who often risk their lives to enter the country, the reception is often downright hostile, even though the U.S. economy depends on their low-wage work.

A more sustainable immigration policy would welcome rather than alienate “strangers,” as Jesus instructed (Matthew 25:35). In the long run, justice and security require a revision of foreign policy and trade agreements that undermine stability in migrants’ home countries. Short of that goal, however, there are clear immigration policy alternatives that would go far toward making friends, not enemies, of the newcomers to the United States.

## **Principles:**

The following immigration policy principles come out of the experience of MCC U.S. staff and service workers across the country. Our faith and work, rooted in Jesus’ message of reconciliation, transcends borders, honors the contributions that immigrants offer and compels us to build communities that welcome migrants. Our faith also moves us to call the government toward justice and security for our migrant brothers and sisters, and, in turn, for all of us. We seek immigration policy that...

1. Provides the option of legal status to the undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. without first requiring a return to their home countries.
2. Allows family members to reunite in a legal and timely way, as well as to immigrate together.
3. Guarantees immigrant workers fair wages and labor rights to organize, change employers and travel legally and safely to and from their homelands. Provides opportunities for permanent residency and, eventually, citizenship.
4. Allows immigrants to use identification from their home countries to establish bank accounts and obtain drivers licenses.
5. Allows lawfully-present immigrants access to non-emergency health care and other public benefits immediately upon receipt of permanent residency, not after years of waiting.
6. Keeps police, fire and health care officials and agencies separate from immigration enforcement officials and agencies, so immigrants can access public services without fear.
7. Acknowledges that increased enforcement along the U.S./Mexico border has not decreased the flow of migrants, but has rather contributed to deaths in the desert. Holds the Border Patrol accountable for abuses of immigrant communities on the border.
8. Recognizes that, at the roots of many migrants’ journeys, is political instability and economic injustice caused, in part, by U.S. foreign policy and trade agreements. Creates incentives for sustainable development in immigrants’ home countries.