



Committee on Migration

c/o Migration and Refugee Services, USCCB

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April 24, 2017

Dear Representative,

I write on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration (USCCB/COM) to urge you to cosponsor and support H.R. 1815, the "Protecting Sensitive Locations Act." Introduced by Representative Adriano Espaillat (D-NY-13), this legislation aims to protect sensitive locations, such as places of worship, schools, and hospitals, from being subjected to nonessential immigration enforcement operations.

H.R. 1815 would largely codify the existing Department of Homeland Security (DHS) policy on sensitive locations, including the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director's memorandum entitled, "Enforcement Actions at or Focused on Sensitive Locations,"¹ the Custom and Border Protection's (CBP) Frequently Asked Questions document,² and DHS' Implementation of Section 1367 Information Provision.³ The measure would require that ICE, CBP, and other individuals designated to perform immigration enforcement functions demonstrate exigent circumstances and receive approval prior to engaging in enforcement actions within 1000 feet of a "sensitive location." Sensitive locations set forth in the bill include places such as churches and other facilities rented for religious services; schools and bus stops; courthouses; health care facilities, doctor's offices, and hospitals; and domestic violence shelters or other victim service providers. H.R. 1815 would also require officers to make every effort to limit enforcement actions carried out at a sensitive location to the targeted person for whom prior approval was obtained.

The Catholic Bishops respect the right of our country to enforce its immigration laws. We are deeply troubled, however, by the fear, panic, and harm that non-targeted enforcement operations can create, particularly for families with young children. Currently, families across the nation are hesitant to send their children to school, attend worship services, and access essential medical and social services, all of which are beneficial for families and our communities. As we work to quell community fear and encourage participation in daily life among our immigrant parishioners, it is vital that all sensitive community locations remain free from nonessential immigration

¹ John Morton, *Enforcement Actions at or Focused on Sensitive Locations*, IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (October 24, 2011), available at <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/ero-outreach/pdf/10029.2-policy.pdf>.

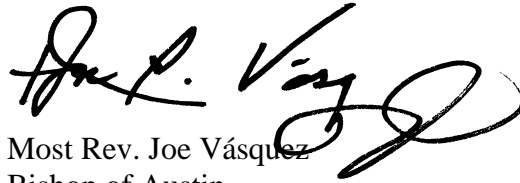
² *Sensitive Locations FAQs*, CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION (Aug. 22, 2016), <https://www.cbp.gov/border-security/sensitive-locations-faqs>.

³ DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, IMPLEMENTATION OF SECTION 1367 INFORMATION PROVISION (NOV. 7, 2013), available at https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/implementation-of-section-%201367-%20information-provisions-instruction-002-02-001_0.pdf.

enforcement actions and surveillance by ICE and CBP officials. Supporting and enacting H.R. 1815 would go a long way toward quelling this hesitation and fear.

While we appreciate that the Trump Administration has not moved to undo the existing policy relating to immigration enforcement at sensitive locations, we firmly believe that commitment to protecting sensitive locations should be codified to provide lasting protection and reassurance to our immigrant community members.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe P. Vásquez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Most Rev. Joe Vásquez
Bishop of Austin
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration