



# CBF Advocacy

## COVID-19 Immigration Policy Statement

*The following is an Immigration Policy Statement on the U.S. government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic developed by the CBF Advocacy Action Team for Immigrants and Refugees. Click [here](#) to learn more about the Advocacy Team and to see a list of its members.*

CBF Advocacy is committed to seeking justice for immigrants and refugees among us. These efforts complement our Global Missions commitment to ministry in the context of global migration. Across the globe and here at home, our field personnel, pastors and church members are ministering alongside those forced to make hard decisions to leave their homelands. Most migrants are escaping violent conflict, environmental degradation or extreme poverty.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis that affects everyone, regardless of their immigration status. Immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees are among the most vulnerable populations in our society. Their access to health care and public benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic is limited. Language barriers, confusion and a lack of trust in public institutions have contributed to marginalizing and distancing the immigrant community amid this global pandemic.

We believe the Christian value of welcoming the stranger and loving our neighbor should guide our efforts to advocate for the immigrant community during this difficult time. Policies that show God's love and kindness for the stranger should allow immigrants to focus primarily on protecting their families during this pandemic. Reasonable policies should move the government to listen to the needs and worries of immigrants, not to ignore them.

We are concerned the government is not taking all necessary measures required to protect immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. We believe the government is treating immigrants unfairly, leaving them defenseless in a time of desperation and uncertainty. We also believe immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees have a right to concentrate on protecting their lives and health from the spread of COVID-19.

The Advocacy Action Team for Immigrants and Refugees is calling for increased advocacy at this critical moment, when our immigrant community is even more vulnerable than before. Therefore, we ask the U.S. government to protect the health and safety of all people when it enacts policies aimed at dealing with this life-threatening crisis. In so doing, we ask supporters to advocate for and urge our elected leaders to support the following policies:

1. Immigration Courts must postpone all hearings, including those in the detained docket, to protect detainees, detention center workers, attorneys, immigration judges and their staff from the spread of COVID-19.
  - a. The internal traffic of a detainee to different places inside the detention facility—including the courtroom—makes the detainee and every person who interacts with him vulnerable to physical contact and to contagion with COVID-19.



2. The Department of Homeland Security should take all available measures to protect the health and safety of immigrants in detention, including, when possible, the release of all children, nonviolent detainees and detainees who suffer from underlying medical conditions.
  - a. Confinement is ideal for the spread of COVID-19 among detainees, detention center workers and the general community. Detention centers do not allow for social distancing, because they are not designed to limit human contact and physical separation.
3. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) should extend all immigration filing deadlines for the duration of the pandemic.
  - a. USCIS should grant an extension for those whose status or benefits will be affected during the COVID-19 pandemic and excuse their late filing. Some immigration attorneys, law firms and legal aid institutions are not providing services to their clients or to the public currently. Simultaneously, immigrants may not have access to some of the documentation needed to appropriately file their applications or renew them, due to shutdowns and closings.
4. The U.S. government should include all tax-paying immigrants in further economic stimulus bills.
  - a. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) allows for the government to send checks to some persons with a Social Security number. Tax-paying immigrants with an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) will not receive any checks, even though they paid their fair share to the government.
5. The U.S. Supreme Court should delay an announcement on the pending Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) case.
  - a. A survey of the Physicians Foundation revealed that about 27,000 of the healthcare workers in the United States are DACA recipients. Our overwhelmed health care system needs focused professionals that can concentrate on helping our community deal with this national health crisis. DACA recipients deserve the opportunity not to be exposed to the threat of deportation or any other immigration alteration during the extension of the COVID pandemic.

