

BRIDGES for a Just Community
Statement on Ohio Immigration Enforcement Bill

BRIDGES for a Just Community understands the full range of complexities associated with comprehensive immigration reform and the protection of our nation's borders.

Our national leaders are charged with the difficult task of drafting and enforcing immigration reform policies. BRIDGES unequivocally supports our nation's rights to limit the number of immigrants permitted to enter our country each year. Likewise, we support our nation's right to deport those who violate our immigration laws.

However, the passage of the controversial Arizona immigration bill signals a disturbing trend in the immigration reform movement. The Arizona law requires immigrants in the state to carry proof of their immigration status. It also mandates that police can question anyone they believe to be in the United States illegally. Such a law begs racial profiling, resulting in the harassment of both documented and undocumented persons.

Current Ohio Senate bills (SB150 and SB35) are similarly troubling – both seek to make significant changes to the current state immigration laws. The new legislation would require employers to check a prospective hire's legal status or risk significant fines and penalties and permit local law enforcement officials to enforce federal immigration laws. Enforcement of Ohio's bills would give employers an incentive to discriminate against anyone they believe to be foreign-born, the risk of a fine for noncompliance is just too great.

Ohio cannot afford to enforce policies unseen since post-Reconstruction America when African Americans were forced to carry 'papers' to show proof of employment. Our national and state policies must not implicitly encourage the mistreatment of immigrants or citizens believed to be foreign-born or who speak English as a second language.

BRIDGES opposes state immigration legislation likely to result in racial profiling, discrimination, or intolerance. BRIDGES deplors all forms of ethnic prejudice, violence, and anti-immigrant vigilantism. Those affected by our immigration policies should be treated with the same respect and dignity owed to all citizens, guests, and visitors in our country.

We call upon our elected representatives to be mindful of the full consequences of the Ohio Senate bills and encourage all in Greater Cincinnati to examine the purposes underlying local and national immigration reform efforts to discern between policies designed to responsibly manage immigration and those designed to intimidate persons of a different national origin.

BRIDGES pledges to continue its work to achieve inclusion, equity, and justice for all immigrants and foreign-born citizens in the United States.

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