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CWS Condemns Legislative Proposal to Reverse President's Immigration Action

Statement on H.R. 5759, the "Preventing Executive Overreach on Immigration Act of 2014"

Church World Service urges all members of the House of Representatives to reject proposals that would separate families, deport our community members and be a step backwards in addressing our broken immigration system. Recent legislation introduced by Representative Yoho (R-FL-3), H.R. 5759, the "Preventing Executive Overreach on Immigration Act of 2014" would prevent the executive branch from meeting its constitutional duty to prioritize enforcement of U.S. immigration law and would result in the separation of millions of families.

"This legislation seeks to crush the dreams and tear apart the families of five million of our immigrant brothers and sisters who recently celebrated the President's executive order to offer selective, temporarily relief from deportation," said CWS President and CEO Rev. John L. McCullough. "As we prepare for Christmas and mark when Jesus entered our world as an immigrant, I urge members of Congress to reflect on the individuals who work the fields to make our feasts possible, who labor in factories, stores and warehouses to make the gifts we give and who work in restaurants and make the beds in our hotel rooms. The lives of these families will be improved by this action. During this season in particular, the President's announcement should be celebrated, not challenged in mean-spirited symbolic votes."

CWS supports President Obama's decision to offer millions of our undocumented community members - mainly individuals who came to the United States as children and the parents of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents - the opportunity to remain with their families and apply for temporary relief from deportation. In addition to reversing the President's recent executive order, H.R. 5759 could also place at risk the lives of individuals in vulnerable and complex situations that require case-by-case review, including survivors of domestic abuse and human trafficking. Since 1956, every single administration has utilized prosecutorial discretion to provide individuals and groups relief from deportation.[1] This discretion[2] is vital to the executive branch's ability to humanely and effectively make decisions about enforcement priorities.

While President Obama's executive order will help millions of families, it is temporary and will not lead to permanent status or citizenship. Rather than taking symbolic votes in opposition to family unity, the House of Representatives should enact immigration reform that will provide a permanent solution and a path to citizenship for all our undocumented community members. Until such reform passes, CWS encourages all members of Congress to support the President's actions and help facilitate its smooth implementation, as it will help keep millions of families together and spare them the fear of deportation.

[1]"Executive Grants of Temporary Immigration Relief, 1956-Present," American Immigration Council, October 2014. <www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/executive_grants_of_temporary_immigration_relief_1956-present_final_1.pdf>.

[2] Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) § 103(a), 8 U.S.C. § 103(a)