

DRAFT STATEMENT

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon Statement on Immigration

Approved by the EMO Executive Committee June 16, 2010

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19:33-34

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) Board of Directors joins the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Association of Evangelicals, National Council of Churches, National Hispanic Leadership Conference and Church World Service, in an urgent call for the U.S. Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform. Without such action at the federal level, the recent passage of immigration legislation S.B. 1070 by the Arizona Legislature will act as a catalyst for other legislative bodies throughout the country to consider similar anti-immigrant laws. This will create a patchwork of immigration laws and regulations resulting in the further marginalization of immigrants throughout the country. It will also create a climate of fear and intolerance affecting citizens and non-citizens alike. Today similar legislation is pending in at least 12 states.

While there is no indication at this time that a similar bill will be introduced in the Oregon Legislature, we are aware that efforts are being made in Marion and Polk Counties to place initiatives on the ballot. These would expand the verification process employers would have to use to determine the legal status of a prospective employee when hiring and expand law enforcement's role at the county level to follow up on perceived violations. EMO opposes such measures at the state and local levels because they are onerous on employers, will divert already limited public resources away from critical law enforcement duties and create an environment of distrust in communities throughout the state.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is also concerned that laws such as S.B. 1070 will adversely impact not only immigrants but all people of the state. S.B. 1070 expands the powers of local law enforcement agencies to enforce federal immigration law and gives individual citizens the right to sue law enforcement agencies if they are perceived as not fully enforcing federal or state immigration law. Additionally it allows private citizens the right to turn-in businesses who they believe may have hired undocumented workers. These elements of the law further erode civil liberties and will not "fix the broken immigration system" nor foster trust between law enforcement and the community. As such, SB 1070 will negatively impact all people in Arizona—immigrant and non-immigrant alike. We support efforts to repeal the law on both constitutional and humanitarian grounds.

Toward this end, EMO urges faith communities throughout Oregon to support the “*Isaiah 58 National Solidarity Vigil and Fast for Arizona*” in support of those who are praying and standing strong in Arizona to demonstrate that the commitment of people of faith for comprehensive immigration reform has not wavered and will not diminish. Special prayer and educational events throughout the country are being organized by the Interfaith Immigration Coalition (www.interfaithimmigration.org) during the months of June and July, with special events in Oregon planned during June 27 – July 3. For further information about the Isaiah 58 project and regional events, visit the EMO website at www.emoregon.org.

In light of these actions at the state and local levels, EMO along with our denominational members and ecumenical partners urge the President and Congressional leadership to work together to pass comprehensive immigration reform. We echo the sentiments expressed by many religious leaders for the calling of a bi-partisan summit with the goal of passing legislation this year. Delays will only put additional stress on local communities, marginalize our nation’s immigrants and make more difficult the implementation of the reform needed to improve our nation’s immigration system.

How we treat the marginalized in our society speaks volumes as to our commitment to the Great Commandment “to love your neighbor as yourself.” The need for humane, just and effective comprehensive immigration reform is now.