



**TESTIMONY ON OF ALEXANDER D. BAUMGARTEN AND KATIE CONWAY ON
BEHALF OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH¹**

FEBRUARY 5, 2013

We thank Representative Goodlatte, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and Ranking Member Conyers for the opportunity to submit this testimony. We welcome this timely hearing, “America’s Immigration System: Opportunities for Legal Immigration and Enforcement of Laws against Illegal Immigration” and wish to express our support for maintaining the family visa system as a cornerstone of our legal immigration system.

The Episcopal Church’s highest governing body, the General Convention, has passed multiple resolutions affirming the rights of all families to reunify without undue delay, including the families of same-sex partners and spouses. These calls are rooted in our understanding of the Christian imperative to “welcome the stranger,” and the experience of our Church’s decades of work with migrant communities. Keeping families apart through per-country caps, redistributing family visas to the employment system, or failing to recognize the immigration claims of same-sex partners harms the U.S. economy, fractures our communities, and denies the socio-economic necessity of family. The family immigration system and the employment system should be viewed as complimentary pieces of a holistic immigration system rather than as separate systems in competition with one another.

We believe that families create healthy individuals and serve as the foundation for strong communities. Family members help one another to other integrate, pursue job opportunities, start their own businesses, and contribute economically, socially and spiritually to our communities. Under current immigration law, however, millions of families are forced to wait decades to reunify and some even face permanent separation. This forces families to make impossible choices between our immigration laws and the people they love.

Our Church recognizes the importance of adhering to our nation’s laws, but we believe we must work change laws if they do not respect the dignity of human beings or respond to the needs of communities. This call to right relationship within human communities is a cornerstone of the Judeo-Christian scriptural and ethical tradition, and finds expression for Episcopalians in the promise each makes at baptism to “strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.” Our immigration system must be transformed to into a just and humane system that discerns between those who enter illegally to do us harm and those who enter because our system cannot provide them with a clear and timely path to family reunification or legal employment. Destructive enforcement programs like Secure Communities should be terminated and the immigrant workers upon whom much of our economy depends should be allowed to sponsor their families.

¹ Alexander D. Baumgarten is the Director of Government Relations, and Katie Conway is the Immigration and Refugee Policy Analyst for the Episcopal Church, a multinational religious denomination based in the United States with members in 15 other sovereign.





Thank you for carrying the costly burden of public service, and for the opportunity to submit these views to the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexander D. Baumgarten and Katie Conway

