

**REPORT TO UUSJ BOARD – IMMIGRANT JUSTICE TASK GROUP**  
**March 28, 2020**

UUSJ/UUSC/TPS Alliance Advocacy: The main activity in February and early March was the collaboration with Advocacy Corps, UUSC and TPS Alliance to gather letters from around the US to deliver to the Senate urging prompt action on legislation providing a pathway to permanent legal status for people holding temporary protected status, TPS. A bill introduced almost a year ago (S 879) has been languishing in the Senate Judiciary Committee for political reasons. Its 32 sponsors are all Democrats. Our task group provided substantive language for the Write Here-Write Now letters, as well as for the eventual briefing paper and leave behind letter for the visit on March 10. We also suggested target audiences based on relevant committee membership or presence of large TPS numbers in the state. As Advocacy will report, over 1000 constituent letters were delivered to appropriate Senate offices. We also arranged for a TPS holder – a Salvadoran residing in Virginia, owning a small business that employs US citizens, as well as having his own two US citizen children – to join several meetings and share his story, to underline the human and economic impact of not addressing this issue. Since the legality of this Administration’s TPS termination is currently being challenged in two different court cases and that TPS holders’ deadlines are being extended to early 2021, staff of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs argued the bill was not urgent.

Maryland and Virginia State Level Actions: The committee is monitoring legislative actions in Virginia and Maryland, both of which have somewhat different political makeup this year, regarding immigration. While following the lead of the state UU action networks, we shared information and promotion for action among the relevant congregations for sending communications supportive of immigrant-friendly bills (reducing information sharing with ICE by local law enforcement, discouraging contracting of new ICE detention center in Maryland, driver’s licenses in Virginia). In today’s politically divided environment, building grassroots support for immigrant-friendly actions is one way to make progress, and reflects a UUA approach for taking action locally to raise awareness of national issues.

Preparing to Service our Congregations through Networking: The Immigration Task Group has a lot of institutional memory/knowledge given all the monitoring we do of partner groups and advocacy efforts. We can develop regular communications with more detail than the UUSJ general e-newsletter but have been waiting for many months for new distribution lists to be prepared as the old SALSA lists are transitioned. Now that there is an administrative assistant, we hope to hear good news on this front. We could also prepare a webinar. Either of these efforts would provide services to congregations beyond the Greater Washington Area as well as locally, depending on the content.

Participating in AFSC/UUSC webinars and United We Dream check-ins: Three members of the committee are participating in a five-month training (Challenging Systems, Challenging Ourselves) developed by AFSC/UUSC to raise awareness of underlying, unintentional racism in the way we as allies interact with immigrants and refugees. We meet as a small team and will share the essence with the rest of the task group. We also joined a DACA/Dreamers webinar about preparing for the Supreme Court decision, expected between now and June, on preparing for an all-out response if the outcome is negative on DACA.

Other: We have signed on to several interfaith petitions on immigrant issues and a provided UUSJ comments on the latest anti-immigrant administrative rule change, this one on broadening reasons to deny asylum.