

California Catholic Bishops Support Sb 54, the California Values Act Cite Importance of Public Safety While Questioning the Wisdom of Indiscriminate Deportations

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Statement from Bishop Jaime Soto, Sacramento, and president of the California Catholic Conference of Bishops: The California Catholic Conference of Bishops supports SB 54, the California Values Act. In the nation today, some are displacing trust and cooperation with fear and hatred. In our estimation, the majority of Californians, as well as the nation, desire rather to build a society where there is liberty and justice for all. SB 54 is attempting to address this situation directly as it grapples with the injustice of indiscriminate deportations while assuring public safety for all our families and neighborhoods. "It is important," says Pope Francis, "to view migrants not only on the basis of their status as regular or irregular, but above all as people whose dignity is to be protected and who are capable of contributing to progress and the general welfare." Many of us know someone — a vulnerable family member, a neighbor or, even a parent or child — who has been deported after years of living in and contributing to our communities. Our families and neighborhoods are being ripped apart by aggressive deportation directives. We also know people who have been victims of violent crimes, particularly associated with drugs and gangs. All members of our community must be able to turn to law enforcement when their safety is threatened else the damage they suffer will be compounded and those responsible for the crimes will escape accountability. Local law enforcement must be able to use their limited resources to be good neighbors as well as watchful protectors of the communities entrusted to their care. The unfair and fragmented immigration system is broken and threatens the public good. Over this past year fear and resentment has been sown in many homes, schools and neighborhoods. Local law enforcement should not collude with this harsh, ill-conceived tactic. Immigrant families are not the threat. Their health and welfare should not be threatened. Too many industrious immigrants suffer under the dual scourge of a broken immigration system and inadequate local policing. As a result, they are lost on the margins, left even more vulnerable to exploitive crimes because their lives are not valued by some in our political community. SB 54 is threading the prudent path between respect for human dignity and sensible community-policing, while resisting a brutish nativist polemic heard in some quarters. Crafting liberty and justice for all in the current climate is not an easy task but California has taken it on with the ongoing debate surrounding SB 54. It is a daunting process but as Californians and people of good will we should remind ourselves of the timely national wisdom: *E pluribus unum*, out of the many one.

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