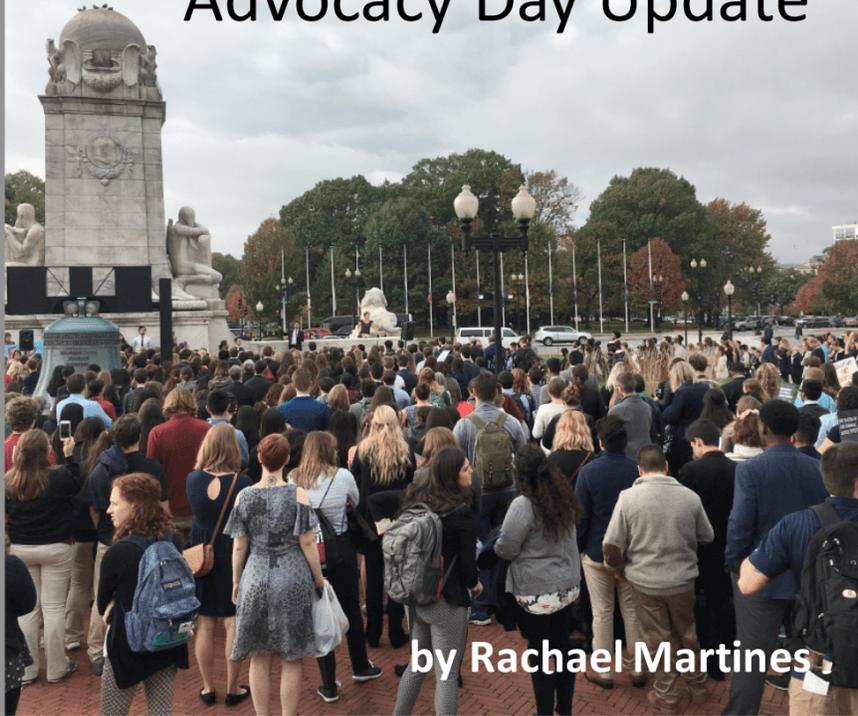


Advocacy Day Update



by Rachael Martines

In November 2017, our St. Ignatius Catholic Community of Baltimore delegation, which included Candra Healy, Vonetta Edwards, Terry Cavanagh, Frank Richardson, and IRC Family Mentor Coordinator, Slaman Zaman, visited the offices of Senator Cardin, Senator Van Hollen, Congressman Sarbanes, Congressman Ruppertsberger, Congressman Cummings, and Congressman Andy Harris, M.D. as part of the culminating advocacy piece of the Ignatian Family Teach-In. We were part of a group of 1,400 Ignatian advocates meeting with Senators and House Representatives to discuss immigration and criminal justice reform after spending three days learning about these issues through a faith lens. Now, in March 2018, we are following up on these meetings.

Last month, February 2018, we sent letters to each of the staff members that we met with, thanking them for their time in November and making direct suggestions for how they can continue to promote immigration and criminal justice reform in the present political moment.

On the topic of immigration reform, we urged our representatives through our letters to promptly pass legislation that provides a path to citizenship for the Dreamers. The Dreamers are a group of nearly 800,000 young people that were brought to the United States as undocumented immigrants as children and were granted protection by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). While Judge William Alsup of Federal District Court in San Francisco [ruled against](#) President Trump's September 2017 decision to end DACA, insisting that the President must "maintain the DACA program on a nationwide basis," a law has yet to be passed by Congress clearly and cleanly protecting Dreamers, leaving them in a precarious state. The struggle for legal action [continues](#).

While immigration has been a hot topic in recent months, mass incarceration has not received such widespread coverage. In our letters, we called our representatives' attention back to the reality that 20,000 people in Maryland are currently trapped behind bars. We asked our House

Representatives to support the Reverse Mass Incarceration Act of 2017, and our Senators to revive the Baltimore Act of 2015, both bills which never made it past the Introduction stage in Congress but have the potential to make a real difference in the lives of our primarily Black brothers who are disproportionately targeted in our corrupt criminal justice system.

Clearly, there is still much work left to be done in the realm of advocacy for immigration and criminal justice reform. As Congress remains stuck in a stalemate on immigration, and distracted from mass incarceration, it is our duty to demand they act on these issues that concern us. We look forward to continued communication with our representative that leads to practical change and the realization of justice for our most vulnerable neighbors.