



St. Ignatius Church Joins 1,400 Ignatian Advocates for Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill On November 6, the St. Ignatius Parish Baltimore delegation (Candra Healy, Vonetta Edwards, Terry Cavanagh, Frank Richardson and IRC Family Mentor Coordinator, Salman Zaman) joined nearly 1,400 Ignatian advocates at Columbus Circle in Washington, D.C. for a public witness gathering with signs, banners, and voices to pray, listen, and recommit to work for justice. The Ignatian Family Teach-In For Justice culminates with this what is estimated to be the largest Catholic advocacy day of the year. Nearly 1,400 individuals then proceeded to legislative advocacy meetings with members of Congress and their staffs on Capitol Hill to urge Congress to enact immigration and criminal justice reform.

Our delegation made visits to the offices of Senator Cardin (with Mr. Matthew Spikes); Senator Van Hollen (with Ms. Virdina Gibbs); Congressman Sarbanes (with Ms. Anna Killius); Congressman Ruppberger (with Mr. David Heitlinger); Congressman Cummings (with Mr. Aaron Blacksberg); and Congressman Andy Harris, M.D. (with Ms. Abigail Balmert).

Throughout the day, we vigorously represented the 800+ registered families of our parish illustrating how we are doing our part, i.e., supporting education, social responsibility projects, and advocacy efforts; and, then we asked our lawmakers to do their part by publicly supporting and legislating to: 1) fight to protect immigrants and refugees in this country; and to 2) create a racially-just criminal justice system.

Since many of our legislators are co-sponsoring the DREAM Act of 2017, we spent time discussing numerous pieces of legislation that would further protect people here under deferred action, temporary protected status (TPS), and refugee status. We also shared personal stories. In our conversations about criminal justice reform, we pointed out opportunities for our lawmakers to seek bipartisan measures especially in the area of Sentencing Reform. Also, we

asked our Representatives to consider co-sponsoring H.R.3845 – Reverse Mass Incarceration Act of 2017 along with Congressman Cummings.

We were very pleased to receive a letter from Mr. Blacksberg on behalf of Congressman Cummings stating that [Congressman Cummings] is, “committed to reforming the American criminal justice system to make it more just and fair, and do whatever is possible to eliminate systemic racial bias in that system.”

In a meeting with Matthew Spikes (Senator Cardin), made us aware of a piece of legislation co-sponsored by Senator Cardin and Senator Mikulski and introduced in the 114th Congress, S1610 Building and Lifting Trust In order to Multiply Opportunities and Racial Equality Act of 2015 or the BALTIMORE Act. This is a bill to eliminate racial profiling by law enforcement officers, promote accountability for State and local law enforcement agencies, re-enfranchise citizens, eliminate sentencing disparities, and promote re-entry and employment programs, and for other purposes. It is a very comprehensive bill that covers many of the issues and topics we are interested in publically supporting and taking up with our legislators. We hope to visit the Senator’s office again to continue this dialogue with Mr. Spikes who extended us an invitation to discuss this topic as well as immigration and refugee resettlement.

In closing, we want to especially thank all of our parishioners who sent emails reinforcing our advocacy visits to Capitol Hill in support of the Dream Act, TPS, refugee resettlement; and creating a racial-just criminal justice system.