

Immigration Policy Principles



Mennonite Central Committee: MCC is the relief, development and peace agency of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in North America. The following principles are derived from the experience of MCC staff in the United States in their attempts to demonstrate God’s love by working among people suffering from poverty, conflict, oppression and natural disaster.

Vision: The Biblical tradition is one that instructs its followers to welcome strangers – *as we welcome the stranger, we welcome Jesus himself*. Instead, immigrants to the United States, whether documented or undocumented, often face a culture of unwelcome: suspicion, isolation, militarized borders, workplace raids, and visa backlogs.

The current system, which relies on harsh enforcement measures and a bureaucratic morass, is ineffective, unjust, and causes needless suffering. Long wait lists keep families separated for years and encourage efforts to circumvent the system. Workplace raids create a culture of fear and harm entire communities. Lax oversight of guest worker programs leaves a system ripe for exploitation and worker abuse.

In order to be truly effective, *immigration reform must address the root causes of migration*. Individuals are willing to risk their lives crossing the desert because the alternative – facing abject poverty or persecution in their home country – is so bleak. Ultimately, the United States must seek foreign policy solutions and trade agreements that promote economic opportunity and stability in migrants’ home countries. Until that goal is achieved, however, the following policy changes can help us welcome newcomers to the United States and honor the rule of law.

MCC U.S. Policy Principles:

1. **Ensure a legal pathway to citizenship** for immigrants currently living in the United States, without requiring unworkable fines or “touchback” provisions.
2. **Maintain the current family-based immigration system** and increase the number of available family visas, so that families can reunite and immigrate together in a legal and timely way.
3. **Create just and fair guest worker programs**, along with appropriate oversight mechanisms, to protect labor rights such as fair wages, employer choice and due process protections. Provide the opportunity for immigrant workers to apply for permanent status and, eventually, citizenship.
4. **Ensure access to basic benefits and services** for those lawfully present, while avoiding policies that seek to deter access to public health and safety services and lead to a culture of fear and isolation in immigrant communities.
5. **Choose border security strategies that protect community rights, human dignity, and the natural environment** while opposing policies that contribute to deaths and increased fear in immigrant communities.
6. **Address political instability and economic disparity** in migrants’ home countries caused, in part, by U.S. foreign policies and trade agreements. Create incentives for sustainable development.
7. **End indiscriminate raids and detention** for non-dangerous immigrants, while targeting enforcement efforts on drug, weapon and people smugglers.