

Eden Area Interfaith Council
Press Statement
In Support of AC-BOS Immigration Defense Resolution
2/6/2016

Good morning. I'm **Rev. Dr. Arlene Nehring**, Senior Minister at Eden United Church of Christ in Hayward. I'm here with **Rev. Maria Cristina Vlassidis**, Minister of Starr King Unitarian Universalist Association, and several other leaders from the **Eden Area Interfaith Council**, which includes 12 Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh organizations and three individuals. Rev. Vlassidis will offer an interfaith prayer.

<<OPENING PRAYER>>

We have come in support of our members and neighbors who are most vulnerable to the Trump Administration's immigration policies.

We have also come to describe examples of heightened distress in our community resulting from the Trump administration's new and proposed immigration policies, and to express the urgent need for—and our support of—the proposed **Immigrant Defense Resolution**, which the Alameda County Board of Supervisors will vote on tomorrow.

Elementary students in the HUSD have been asking me for months, "Is it true that Donald Trump is going to deport all of our families?"

One elementary vice-principal recently told me that he's served in our district 15 years and has never seen families more upset than they are now about the Trump administration's policies and treatment of immigrants. The vice-principal said that some students are terrified of being separated from their parents, so they beg to stay home from school, while many attend school but have trouble focusing on their studies. This heightened level of worry has resulted in increased anxiety-related health issues in our elementary students, including a significant increase in self-mutilation (cutting).

Meanwhile many of our best and brightest high school and college students are finding it harder to plan for their futures, because the federal DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program is in limbo. DACA students wonder whether they should apply for college, whether they will be able to stay in college, and whether they'll be eligible for scholarships and continued employment. Some want to study abroad, but are afraid to leave the U.S. for fear that they won't be allowed to return. They wonder, too, what will happen to family members who depend on them to navigate our culture, if they (the DACA students) get deported.

Families with one or more undocumented members aren't the only people suffering from inhospitable federal immigration policies. One local school administrator who told me that his family has been in the U.S. for six generations also told me that his youngest son came home from school asking what "deported" meant. The father gave

the definition. Then the son asked, “Daddy, if my best friend gets deported, who am I going to play with at recess?”

Two weeks ago, I attended a rally at Hayward City Hall designed to bring a diverse group of residents together to work on common causes. One attendee, an Iranian immigrant, business woman, and mother of two children who lives in Castro Valley, told me that she and her family have been legal residents of the U.S. for many years. Yet, they have been experiencing increased amounts of harassment.

For example, she was recently insulted by a middle-aged white man at a Castro Valley grocery store she patronizes. The man walked up to her while she was searching for her car keys, and walked circles around her while telling her to go back to where she came from, and saying that Donald Trump was going to make sure that she did. The woman told me that she did nothing to evoke these rude comments other than perhaps to go to the grocery store wearing a hijab, a symbol of cultural and religious identity for many women from Muslim countries. This woman went on to explain that she had never attended a political rally before, but felt compelled to do something. She said that she felt the need to show her children that they must resist and respond peacefully to harassment and discrimination by working with other leaders to increase hospitality, understanding, and cooperation in our community.

I told my new friend that I was very sorry about the harassment that she and her family had experienced, and explained that my faith values and the values of other Eden Area Interfaith Council members were consistent with hers. We all share the values of hospitality, understanding, and cooperation in our community.

The Supervisors’ proposed immigration defense resolution aligns with the EAIC’s faith values, the faith values of our congregants, and the highest ideals of American democracy. We are grateful to Supervisors Valle and Chan for bringing this resolution forward. We, our Council members, and our congregants are in full support of it. Thank you.

**EAIC Roster
2/6/2017**

Jewish Congregations

- Shir Ami, Castro Valley
- Temple Beth Sholom, San Leandro

Christian Congregations

- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Hayward
- Holy Cross Episcopal Church, Castro Valley
- First Presbyterian Church, Hayward
- United Church of Hayward, UCC
- Eden United Church of Christ, Hayward

Faith-Based Social Service Organizations

- South Hayward Parish

Muslim Mosques

- Masjid Abu Bakr, Hayward

Hindu Temples

- Badarikashrama of San Leandro

Sikh Temples

- Gurdwara Sahib of Hayward

Unitarian Universalist Associations

- Starr King Unitarian Church, Hayward

Individuals

- Penelope Anne Hughes, spiritual independent
- Father Michael Castori, All Saints Roman Catholic Church, Hayward
- Sue Merrill, All Saints Episcopal Church, San Leandro