

March 6, 2015

*Dear members of the U.S. House Judiciary Committee and the House of Representatives at large,*

*American Baptist Women's Ministries wishes to convey to you its opposition to "The Michael Davis, Jr., in Honor of State and Local Law Enforcement Act", as described below:*

**American Baptist Women's Ministries statement to the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, regarding The Michael Davis, Jr., In Honor State and Local Law Enforcement Act**

*American Baptist Women's Ministries strongly opposes The Michael Davis, Jr., in Honor of State and Local Law Enforcement Act (formerly known as the "SAFE Act,") as it would harm families, communities, and faith groups across the United States.*

*American Baptist Women's Ministries is part of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., one of the most racial/ethnically diverse Christian denominations in the United States with 1.3 million members across the U.S. and Puerto Rico. In 2015, there is no single ethnic majority in our denomination; we embrace our diversity and understand how that diversity has strengthened us as individuals and as a faith community. American Baptists understand themselves as being called to be Christ's witnesses for justice and wholeness within a broken society. This diversity and this calling propel us to action and advocacy on behalf of vulnerable migrants in need of safety and a place of refuge. American Baptist Women's Ministries has a particular concern for victims of human trafficking and exploited women and children, seeking healing and wholeness for all. The United States has historically welcomed vulnerable peoples to its shores and American Baptist Women's Ministries urges the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee to continue in that strong tradition of offering refuge.*

*Therefore, American Baptist Women's Ministries encourages members of the judiciary committee to reject H.R. 2278, which would remove or reduce vital protections such as the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPR), passed unanimously by Congress and signed into law by President Bush in 2008.*

*The SAFE Act, or H.R. 2278, is based on Arizona's S.B. 1070, a policy which has led to racial profiling, a lack of trust between communities and public safety officials, stigmatized immigrant communities, and redirected limited police resources. Numerous cases of racial profiling and illegal detention have been documented in Arizona since the passing of S.B. 1070, resulting in lawsuits. Additionally, the former Secure Communities program was proven ineffective and instead built walls between law enforcement officers and the communities they were trying to serve. As is evidenced by the formation of a Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force in January, 2015, ("Law Enforcement Leaders Launch Immigration Task Force," [www.immigrationforum.org](http://www.immigrationforum.org), accessed March 6, 2015), it is a benefit to law enforcement to have a relationship built on trust with members of the community, not one built on harassment and fear. Law enforcement officials state that the fear of deportation can be used by criminals to coerce victims into silence. Instead, immigrants should feel comfortable reporting crimes, serving as witnesses, and calling for help in emergencies, none of which would happen if H.R. 2278 were to be enacted. Increasing the level of trust between immigrants and law enforcement would improve everyone's safety.*

*American Baptist Women's Ministries has grave concern that the provision would criminalize faith communities providing assistance to individuals regardless of their immigration status, as well as volunteers, friends, or family members who "transport, move, harbor or shield" a refugee, asylum-seeker, or anyone whose immigration status has lapsed. American Baptist Women's Ministries lives by Luke 4:18-19, "... preach good news to the poor....proclaim release to the captives....let the oppressed go free." Our spiritual mandate is to welcome the stranger and treat the immigrant as a citizen among us; this legislation would interfere with our Christian mission to do so. It would also broaden the problematic "material support" bars that have already unjustly denied protection to Burmese pro-democracy freedom fighters, parents forced to pay ransoms for their children's freedom, women forced to cook and clean for their captors—unjustly labeling them as supporters of terrorism.*

*The Michael Davis, Jr., in Honor of State and Local Law Enforcement Act is not in honor of law enforcement at all; indeed, it simply complicates their mission to protect and to serve. It puts into danger immigrant families already living in neighborhoods across the United States, and reduces the safety of all members of a community as it precludes law enforcement from effectively responding to crime. **American Baptist Women's Ministries urges members of the House Judiciary Committee and the House of Representatives at large to reject these proposals, and instead affirm support for the protection of***

**vulnerable, persecuted, threatened individuals.** *American Baptist Women's Ministries is committed to policies that strengthen families and vulnerable communities, and that treat all persons with dignity and respect.*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Virginia R. Holmstrom".

Virginia R. Holmstrom  
Executive Director  
American Baptist Women's Ministries  
American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.  
P.O. Box 851  
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851  
Office phone: 610-768-2284  
Email address: [Virginia.holmstrom@abc-usa.org](mailto:Virginia.holmstrom@abc-usa.org)  
Website: [www.abwministries.org](http://www.abwministries.org)