Dear Members of Congress,

The United Church of Christ is an Immigrant Welcoming Church, honoring the profound struggles migrants who come to the United States face in search of security and opportunity, and celebrating the myriad contributions migrants offer to our communities.

As regional representatives of the United Church of Christ, we stand in vehement opposition to the Administration’s continued campaign to deny welcome to migrants by instituting a host of draconian practices including family separation, indefinite child detention, deplorable detention conditions, and stripping away legal access to the asylum process. These ongoing efforts to terrorize, degrade, and demonize migrants are immoral and unacceptable. With the rise of anti-immigrant rhetoric, we have seen a troubling increase in violence perpetrated against migrants. As people of faith, the coordinated diminishment of our fellow human beings - especially children - is in direct contravention with the Gospel, which teaches us to welcome the sojourner and love our neighbor.

In preparation for the Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations discussions we urge your compassionate response to the following:

As Congress debates the Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations legislation they must reject increased funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that is used by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for immoral detention and deportation of migrants. Instead, Congress must invest in programs that serve our communities, offer true humanitarian assistance and protect human dignity.

In addition to rejecting overspending on detention, deportation, and border militarization, Congress must enact stringent oversight mechanisms on existing DHS enforcement practices. The crass overspending and harmful enforcement activities of ICE and CBP have resulted in the mass and sometimes fatal mistreatment of migrants.

Finally, Congress must invest in community-based alternatives to detention. These alternatives shift the paradigm and bias away from detention and toward non-restrictive alternatives that support individuals who are navigating the immigration and asylum systems.
The monetary cost of these programs and policies is astronomical, the human cost, incalculable. Where we put our money speaks to a larger truth about who we are as a country. The current bias toward detention and banishment and the emphasis on criminalization, deny migrants' humanity and dignity.

In congregations and communities across the country, our churches are in solidarity with and welcoming our immigrant neighbors. Our faith community has a strong history of objecting to inhumane conditions and speaking out that all people should be treated with compassion and care.

We are bolstered by our belief that extending a welcome to migrants not only helps communities flourish but that it is living into a higher moral call. We strongly urge you to reject increases in detention, deportation and border militarization funding, commit to strong and meaningful oversight of DHS policies and practices, and earnestly seek more compassionate and humane alternatives to detention.

Faithfully,

Rev. Campbell Lovett          Michigan Conference
Rev. Dr. Marc Ian Stewart     Montana - Northern Wyoming Conference
Rev. Shana Johnson            Illinois South Conference
Rev. Dr. Ginny Brown Daniel   Missouri Mid-South Conference
Rev. Franz S. Rigert          Wisconsin Conference
Rev. Marilyn B. Kendrix       Rhode Island Conference
Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates         Penn Northeast Conference
Rev. Shari Prestemon          Minnesota Conference
Rev. David Long-Higgins       Ohio Conference
Rev. Char Burch               Southeast Conference
Rev. Dr. Don Longbottom       South Central Conference
Rev. Michael Denton           Pacific Northwest Conference
Rev. Dr. William M. Lyons     Southwest Conference
Rev. Dr. Diane Weible         Northern California Nevada Conference
Rev. John Vertigan            Florida Conference
Rev. Dr. Lynn Bujnak          Vermont Conference
Rev. Justo González II        Illinois Conference
Rev Don Remick                Massachusetts Conference
Rev. Gordon M. Rankin         New Hampshire Conference
Rev. Chad Abbott              Indiana-Kentucky Conference
Rev. David Ackerman           Penn West Conference
Rev. Kent J. Siladi           Connecticut Conference
Dr. Edith Guffey              Kansas-Oklahoma Conference
Rev. David R Gaewski          New York Conference
Rev. Deborah J Blood          Maine Conference
Rev. Molly Carlson            Central Pacific Conference
Rev. Bridgit F. Stevens       Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Conference
Rev. Freeman L. Palmer        Central Atlantic Conference
Rev. David R. Gaewski         New York Conference