



Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

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Franciscan Action Network Testimony on Birthright Citizenship
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Submitted to the U.S. House Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security
for a Hearing on Birthright Citizenship:
Is it the Right Policy for America?

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Chairman Gowdy, Ranking Member Lofgren, and members of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security, thank you for extending the opportunity to submit testimony regarding defense of the birthright citizenship provisions of the United States Constitution.

Franciscan Action Network is a national organization of Franciscan religious and lay persons which provides a unified Franciscan voice for justice. Our network includes fifty member institutions and thousands of individuals across the United States, with members in all fifty states.

While it is difficult to believe that birthright citizenship is being challenged, Franciscan Action Network (FAN) wishes to lend its support to maintaining without amendment, Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment which provides that “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside, and ensures “that all native-born children, whether members of an unpopular minority or descendants of privileged ancestors. . .have the inalienable right to citizenship and all its privileges and immunities.”

Proposals have been submitted previously by legislators in national and state level governance that would weaken birthright citizenship by imposing additional requirements. Proponents maintain that the Fourteenth Amendment has been misinterpreted and that undocumented immigrants are not “subject to the jurisdiction of the United States” because they are citizens of their countries of origin. By making citizenship depend on ancestry, rather than on place of birth, all citizens and their descendants would lose the ability to prove their citizenship by their birth certificate alone. All of us who were born in this country, but whose parents or grandparents arrived in this country as immigrants would need documentation other than our birth certificates that we were born here, and thus, have been citizens from the time we were born.

Birthright citizenship, as defined in our Constitution, should not be in need of defense, but since it is being challenged, FAN strongly defends it on both judicial and moral grounds. Our faith teaches us that human dignity is at the core of social, ethical and civic values and that human rights must be defended. Our nation grew and prospered because of the many contributions of those who came here believing in the hope and promise of the American Dream. Birthright citizenship is a basic and critical protection of our national values of hospitality, opportunity, and justice.