



Committee on Migration

c/o Migration and Refugee Services, USCCB

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July 11, 2017

Dear Representative,

I write on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration (USCCB/COM) to urge you to consider supporting H.R. 2200, the "Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2017." This bipartisan legislation, introduced by Representative Smith (R-NJ-4) and Representative Bass (D-CA-37) on April 27, 2017, is vital to continuing our nation's efforts to eradicate human trafficking and assist human trafficking victims.

The Catholic Church has a longstanding role in the prevention of human trafficking and the rehabilitation of victims. Calling human trafficking "an open wound on the body of contemporary society" and "a crime against humanity" Pope Francis and the Vatican have taken global leadership on anti-trafficking initiatives. In the United States, we support Pope Francis' commitment and will continue to work to eradicate human trafficking and rehabilitate victims.

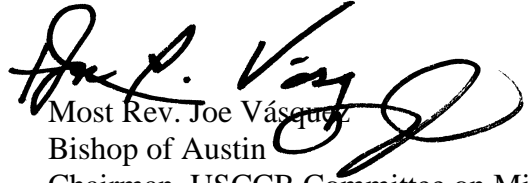
H.R. 2200 is an important step Congress can take to help prevent human trafficking and protect victims as it provides important service provisions that will aid victims. Programs and services such as those contained in H.R. 2200 recognize the importance of dignified care for and reintegration of human trafficking victims. As Pope Francis has stated: "[Trafficking] victims are from all walks of life, but are most frequently among the poorest and most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters." I believe that these exploited individuals deserve the care and support of our communities and our government and that such support will help them heal and become survivors."

We are also pleased to see that H.R. 2200 includes provisions which would aid the monitoring of child, forced, and slave labor, as well as further the elimination of human trafficking in U.S. government supply chains. These are issues which are of deep concern to Catholics globally. As Pope Francis explained at the 2015 World Day of Peace, "Purchasing is always a moral – and not simply an economic – act."

We thank Congress for its long-standing commitment to confront modern-day slavery. We ask that you renew your commitment by supporting H.R. 2200 and work to keep this a bipartisan effort.

The need for this legislation is great; we must come together to fight this crime against humanity and ensure that survivors are given the services they need to live with dignity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe P. Vásquez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Most Rev. Joe Vásquez
Bishop of Austin
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration