Dear Member,

The undersigned 31 religious organizations and organizations that advocate for religious liberty, representing people across the country who follow a wide range of religions and beliefs, write to urge you to support legislation, to be introduced by Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA) later this week, that would bar religious discrimination in U.S. immigration policies.

Our nation has a long and proud history of providing safe harbor for members of communities fleeing persecution and seeking a better life on our shores. Catholics, Protestants, Eastern Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus and atheists, among others, have all come to our country because of the religious freedom protected by our Constitution. These communities may have been met at first with fear, distrust and discrimination, but the First Amendment has allowed each to thrive and foster communities despite these hurdles. It is this commitment to religious freedom that has allowed religious diversity and practice to flourish in this country like nowhere else.

Today, this honored legacy is in jeopardy. Concerns about national security are mixing with unchecked anti-Muslim bigotry and fomenting unjust fear and scrutiny of Muslim refugees and immigrants. Sadly, that fear has led some to call for a temporary ban on Muslims immigrating to the U.S., to propose dramatically limiting the number of refugees our nation accepts, and to pursue a host of policies designed to make life difficult for Muslims in America. To close our doors to Muslim immigrants and refugees in need would betray both the First Amendment and our nation’s great history as an open and welcoming land.

The legislation, which will be introduced by Rep. Beyer later this week, is a simple measure that would bar the U.S. from denying a person the opportunity to enter this country based solely on his or her religion. This bill is an important step toward ensuring that our nation will remain open to people of all faiths and beliefs, securing the religious freedom of all.
Significantly, this proposal would not prevent our nation from proactively seeking to help persecuted religious minorities around the world find safety on our shores while also maintaining our national security. The U.S. would still be able to consider threats to religious communities as an important factor in asylum and refugee considerations, just as we did with Jews fleeing the Holocaust and the Soviet Union, Christians from the Middle East, and Buddhists, Catholics and other Christians from Vietnam.

This bill reflects our fundamental commitment to religious freedom by ensuring that our immigration policies honor the greatest chapters of our nation’s history of religious liberty. As a member of Congress sworn to uphold our constitutional guarantee of religious freedom, we urge you to support this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Interfaith Alliance
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
American Humanist Association
Anti-Defamation League
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good
Center for Inquiry
Christian Reformed Church in North America – Office of Social Justice
Church World Service
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Foundation for Ethnic Understanding
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Habonim Dror
Islamic Society of North America
Millstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Jewish Women
National Justice for Our Neighbors
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Rabbinical Assembly
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College/ Jewish Reconstructionist Communities
Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign
T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society