American Friends Service Committee statement for the Congressional Record  
pertaining to the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing  
Monday, March 18, 2013

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is an almost 100-year old faith-based organization grounded in the Quaker belief in the dignity and worth of every person. AFSC provides direct legal services and engages in organizing with immigrants and allies along with advocacy and movement building throughout the U.S. Our immigration policy recommendations are grounded in AFSC’s history and values as a faith-based organization and in the voices of the impacted communities with whom we are deeply connected.

Not surprisingly, immigrants deported from the U.S. are members of their family units. The Department of Homeland Security released statistics stating that 204,810 parents of U.S. citizen children were removed from the U.S. between July 2010 and September 2012. What numbers cannot show is the life changing impact of family separation on children in particular, as well as on the family as a whole. Youth who have lost a parent due to deportation or detention exhibit dramatic behavioral changes such as heightened anxiety, anger, fear and frequent crying, as illustrated in a 2010 Urban Institute study. Sadly, upon the removal of their parent(s), some children are left without a loved one to care for them. According to the Applied Research Center over 5,000 children currently in foster care have parents who are detained or deported. Experts estimate that an additional 15,000 children may be placed in foster care over the next five years as a result of immigration enforcement.

Today, more than half of all documented and undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are women and an estimated 4.1 million women are undocumented. Women without legal status often live in the shadows out of fear of being separated from their families through deportation, rendering them extremely vulnerable to workplace exploitation and domestic abuse. This population’s well-being is further eroded through denial of basic health care and social services.

AFSC offers the following policy recommendations:

- End arrests, detention, and deportation of immigrants.
- Pass legislation that allows people who reside in the U.S. to apply immediately for permanent residence and citizenship if they choose.
- Expedite the processing of pending visa applications.
- Ensure that positive factors are always balanced against any negative factors when determining eligibility for status.
- Ensure that children can immigrate with parents and eliminate harsh obstacles to immigrating.
- Extend access to quality, affordable health care and social services to everyone, regardless of immigration status.
- Eliminate rules that discriminate between immigrants and non-immigrants in determining eligibility for public benefits.

AFSC urges the Committee to exert visionary leadership and to support new immigration policies that respect the human rights and equal economic opportunity of all in our communities. Thank you for this opportunity to submit a statement to the Committee.