

June 23, 2025

Dear Representative/Senator:

As organizations representing a diverse range of faith traditions, we write to express our support for the bipartisan Religious Workforce Protection Act (RWPA) (S. 1298/H.R. 2672). Millions of Americans across our country rely on the essential contributions of foreign-born religious workers. Unless Congress acts, communities will increasingly be forced to part with the men and women who have faithfully served them for years, and religious exercise will be hindered in their absence.

Religious workers on an R-1 visa are limited to five years in the United States. Previously, the religious organizations sponsoring these workers could apply for them to receive permanent status within that timeframe. That is no longer possible. An expanded backlog in the employment-based, fourth preference (EB-4) visa category means a religious worker applying today will be forced to wait over 17 years for a green card. Meanwhile, current regulations require someone to be outside of the United States for at least one full year before possibly returning on a new R-1 visa. This poses tremendous hardship for religious organizations, our workers, and the families we serve, and it undermines the intent of Congress in creating the Religious Worker Visa Program.

The RWPA allows religious workers who are lawfully present in the country to request that the Department of Homeland Security extend their R-1 status until they can receive their green card, so long as (1) their employer has formally petitioned for their permanent status and (2) they are otherwise eligible to become lawful permanent residents. Those who were already forced to abandon their ministries prior to the RWPA's enactment would be granted a limited exemption from the one-year requirement. Finally, the bill puts religious workers on par with other employment-based immigrants in certain circumstances by allowing them to change positions within the same field without having to restart the permanent residency process from the beginning. This narrow measure is based on precedent in existing law and does not modify the underlying visas in any way.

Foreign-born religious workers make it possible for people to practice their faith in communities large and small across every state in the nation. Additionally, many of these workers serve people of other faiths or no faith at all through their roles in schools, hospitals, nursing homes, military settings, and more. Only Congress has the ability to ensure their contributions can continue without interruption.

We urge you to promote the free exercise of religion in our country for the benefit of all Americans by passing this critical source of relief into law.

Respectfully,

Agudath Israel of America
Bruderhof
Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Disciples Home Missions
The Episcopal Church
Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Fellowship of Missions
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
Hindu American Foundation (HAF)
Immigrant Hope
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Missionary Gospel Fellowship
National Association of Evangelicals
National Latino Evangelical Coalition (NaLEC)
OneHope
Orthodox Church in America
The Salvation Army USA
Seventh-day Adventist Church North American Division
Southern Pacific District of the Assemblies of God
UMC General Board of Church and Society
Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO)
World Relief