

My name is Rev. Michael Vanacore. I am the Senior Pastor of Pilgrim United Church of Christ in Wheaton, Maryland and a resident of Silver Spring, just south of Wheaton. We are members of Action In Montgomery.

As an individual, resident, pastor, and community leader, I strongly urge you to pass the Trust Act.

I am personally affected by this act. Members of my close family, here in Montgomery County, are living in terror of ICE enforcement. We worry every day for their safety and well-being.

This act also impacts my work as a pastor. I have personally observed a drop in attendance and a fear on the part of some of my parishioners because of the lawless and cruel actions of our federal government. I know the same to be true for the other congregations that share our building.

And this work impacts me as a community leader and neighbor. In just the past few months, with the support of both AIM and my congregation, I have prayed at my immigrant neighbors' bedsides when they are sick, raised money and organized meal trains for them when they are destitute, worked day and night to find immigration representation for them when they are detained, and sat with them in the despair that comes when their loved ones are deported. And I bear personal witness to the pain and suffering this enforcement is inflicting on our community—not just in terms of the direct immigration consequences, but also in terms of the financially, economically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

My faith tells me that the single greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God, and to love my neighbor as myself. And while our federal government is doing everything in its power to oppress, drive out, and terrorize our immigrant neighbors, this bill gives us a chance to welcome them and defend them. I urge you, both as an individual and resident, and also a spiritual leader, to stand on the side of justice, humanity, community, and God: pass the Trust Act!