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## **Diocese of Providence hosts inaugural regional Catholic gathering, “Witness to Hope: Responding to Mass Deportations”**

**PROVIDENCE, RI** – The Diocese of Providence, in partnership with the Hope Border Institute (HOPE) (El Paso, TX) and the Center for Migration Studies (CMS) (New York, NY), brought together faith leaders, diocesan staff, migrant advocates and community leaders from across New England for the first-ever “Witness to Hope: Responding to Mass Deportations” regional gathering today at the Cathedral of Ss. Peter and Paul in Providence, Rhode Island.

The day-long event included panels and strategy sessions addressing Catholic teaching on immigration, the current policy landscape, and strategies for responding to mass deportations, including guidance on sensitive locations, communications and accompaniment of affected families. The convening was co-sponsored by Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), Catholic Health Association, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

**The Bishop of Providence, Most Reverend Bruce A. Lewandowski, C.Ss.R.**, emphasized the Church’s call to stand in solidarity with migrant communities and the moral urgency that compelled the diocese to host this gathering: “Immigration isn’t politics – it’s part of our DNA as people of faith. God commands us to welcome the immigrant, to love the foreigner. Too easily, we give into our worst fears, basest instincts, and evil inclinations. Some of our most anti-immigrant voices are in our own church.

“God’s word offers the alternative to enforcement, detention, and deportation. Welcoming the stranger is a moral imperative – our salvation depends on it. We must counter fear with our faith, with a concerted collective effort to get the Word out there... Not enough Catholics are standing

up to make a difference. Families are being destabilized: moms and dads, husbands and wives are being plucked out of our communities. None of the people I know who have been taken are criminals [...]. All they did was cross the border, like Abraham, like Moses, like Sarah, like Jacob, like Jesus, Mary & Joseph.”

The gathering took place as part of a national initiative developed by HOPE and CMS to assist the Catholic Church in organizing a robust response on behalf of migrants and refugees living in fear of immediate deportation.

While immigrants of various statuses have been impacted this year by the current administration’s policies and enforcement efforts, the most vulnerable population is the nearly half-a-million (473,000) undocumented New Englanders, with 41,500 undocumented immigrants in Rhode Island specifically (according to CMS estimates). Undocumented immigrant workers hold key roles in New England’s industries, including construction (16% of the region’s undocumented workforce), healthcare & social assistance (10.1%) and manufacturing (9.5%) industries.

“At a moment when inhumane mass deportation policies are tearing at the very fabric of our society, our collective response must be grounded in facts and a clear understanding of how harsh policies are hurting immigrant families”, **said Rosalie Wells, Communications Manager of CMS**. “By grounding the conversation in data, policy analysis and case studies of community-led response initiatives, CMS, Hope Border Institute and our partners are equipping the local Catholic community to effectively tackle misinformation and step up to defend our migrant brothers and sisters. We are called not only to compassion but to informed and coordinated action in defense of human dignity.”

“This gathering reflects the urgency felt within the Catholic Church to respond to the injustice of mass deportation with effective solidarity with our immigrant sisters and brothers and to work together for humane and fair immigration solutions”, **said Dylan Corbett, executive director of the Hope Border Institute**. “We’re grateful to the Diocese of Providence for their leadership in making this event happen. The Hope Border Institute and the Center for Migration Studies are committed to advancing this critical work with dioceses and faith communities across the country.”

[Photo Visuals](#) (Credit: HOPE & CMS)

[More About the Initiative](#)

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The **Hope Border Institute (HOPE)** is the premier strategy center for faith leaders pursuing justice at the US-Mexico border. Through a robust program of research and policy work, leadership development and action, we work to build justice and deepen solidarity across the borderlands. Learn more at [www.hopeborder.org](http://www.hopeborder.org).

The **Center for Migration Studies (CMS)** is a New York-based educational institute devoted to the study of international migration, to the promotion of understanding between immigrants and receiving communities, and to public policies that safeguard the dignity and rights of migrants, refugees, and newcomers. For more information, please visit [www.cmsny.org](http://www.cmsny.org).

The **Diocese of Providence** is the Roman Catholic Church covering all of Rhode Island, serving more than 500,000 Catholics through 119 parishes, 35 Catholic schools, and numerous institutions, agencies, ministries, and charities. Established in 1872 by Blessed Pope Pius IX, the Diocese of Providence is led by His Excellency, the Most Reverend Bruce A. Lewandowski, C.Ss.R., appointed the 10th Bishop of Providence by His Holiness, Pope Francis, in 2025. Learn more at <https://dioceseofprovidence.org>.

***Notes on methodology: CMS data uses the 2023 American Community Survey and CMS's methodology to estimate undocumented residents, including those with liminal statuses (DACA, TPS, humanitarian parole, and pending asylum) whose legal protections are shifting rapidly under the current administration.***