

Evangelical Immigration Table

Council for Christian Colleges
and Universities

Ethics and Religious Liberty
Commission of the Southern
Baptist Convention

Korean Churches for
Community Development/Faith
and Community Empowerment

National Association of
Evangelicals

National Hispanic Christian
Leadership Conference

The Wesleyan Church

World Relief

April 19, 2018

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of 35,000 foreign-born adoptees of U.S. citizen parents, please support the bipartisan Adoptee Citizenship Act, S. 2522 or H.R. 5233. We believe that we must extend adoptees of U.S. citizen parents the privileges, rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship.

We write as leaders of evangelical Christian churches and organizations, who strongly support the ministry of adoption. As Christians, we are called by God to care for both orphans and immigrants. Fulfilling this mandate is among our highest callings. Nearly 30 percent of evangelical leaders in the United States are either adopted or have immediate family members who have been adopted.

As members of the Evangelical Immigration Table, we ask you to fix a major gap in U.S. law that has prevented an estimated 35,000 adoptees from becoming U.S. citizens. In 2000, Congress passed the Child Citizenship Act (CCA) to guarantee citizenship to most children adopted from foreign countries by U.S. citizen parents. However, the CCA only applied to adoptees who were under the age of 18 when it went into effect on February 27, 2001. Adoptees who were over the age of 18 were unable to benefit from this piece of legislation and obtain U.S. citizenship.

One example of an individual affected by this gap is Justin Ki Hong. Justin was adopted from South Korea at age 2, but his American parents never filled out the paperwork to naturalize him after bringing him to the United States in 1985. He remembers playing basketball in his Oregon high school and putting his hand over his heart during the national anthem, proud to be a citizen of the United States. However, when Justin applied for a job years later, he learned for the first time that he had never been a U.S. citizen. Justin was 18 at the time the CCA went into effect and unable to obtain citizenship through the act. He is now 35 years old, and still not an American citizen. Under the new priority guidelines issued by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Justin could be potentially deported to a country he did not grow up in and does not know.

Tens of thousands of adoptees like Justin, though the children of U.S. citizen parents, are not U.S. citizens themselves. This reality limits their access to college admission and financial aid, prevents them from being hired for certain jobs, and could even put some at risk of deportation. The Adoptee Citizenship Act would correct this gap in the law by providing citizenship to those who were lawfully adopted by American parents as children but were 18 years or older when the CCA went into effect. It would also permit certain adoptees who have been deported and are able to return lawfully to the United States to become citizens after the completion of a criminal background check.

We strongly believe that these adoptees, who are American in every way except their immigration status, should gain the rights and protections of U.S. citizenship.

We hope that you will take swift action to reduce the pain and fear these individuals and their families face every day, and strengthen our country's

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tradition of providing safety and refuge to adoptees born outside our borders. We will be praying for you as you work on this issue and would be happy to collaborate with you. Please contact Travis Wussow of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention at twussow@erlc.com for more information.

Sincerely,

Leith Anderson, President, National Association of Evangelicals

Scott Arbeiter, President, World Relief

Shirley V. Hoogstra, President, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Hyepin Im, President & CEO, Korean Churches for Community
Development/Faith and Community Empowerment

Jo Anne Lyon, Ambassador, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan
Church

Russell Moore, President, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern
Baptist Convention

Samuel Rodriguez, President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership
Conference