



IIMA
Human Rights Office
Istituto Internazionale
Maria Ausiliatrice



Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice
Salesiane di Don Bosco
Mary Immaculate Province - SUO
San Antonio - Texas (USA)



Human Rights Council

Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of United States of America

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Joint Stakeholders' Submission on:

Human Rights in the United States of America

Submitted by:

IIMA - Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice delle Salesiane di Don Bosco

**VIDES International – International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education
and Development**

(NGOs in Consultative Status with ECOSOC)

**Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians- Mary Immaculate Province SUO
San Antonio, Texas USA**

VIDES USA- Volunteers In Development, Education, & Solidarity

Geneva, April 2025

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This UPR submission highlights key concerns related to the **rights of children, migrants and other vulnerable groups** in the United States of America (USA). Each section conveys recommendations to the USA Government.
2. The data and information obtained for this submission came from various sources and includes information from youth, teachers, educators, and other civil society actors living and working in the USA. All information concerned the period from May 2020 to March 2025.
3. **Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice (IIMA)** is an international NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. IIMA is present in 97 countries where it provides education to children, adolescents, youth and women, particularly the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.
4. **VIDES International**, established in 1987, is an international NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council operating in 49 countries. It promotes youth volunteer service at the local and international levels to ensure the implementation of human rights to vulnerable groups, especially children and women.
5. **Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians- Mary Immaculate Province SUO San Antonio, Texas USA**, is dedicated to young people, the vulnerable, and women at risk. Together with their collaborators, they are responding to the profound hopes of today's youth through education and human rights promotion.
6. **VIDES USA (Volunteers In Development, Education, & Solidarity)**, is a volunteer missionary program that works to promote social justice, solidarity, and generosity, while serving the poor and the marginalized.

I. GENERAL REMARKS AND COOPERATION WITH THE UPR MECHANISM

7. This NGO coalition welcomes the constructive participation of the United States of America in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The present joint submission represents the follow-up to the UPR recommendations accepted by the State in 2020.
8. The implementation of recommendations is critical in order to ensure a true advancement of human rights in the State under review. The United States must pay particular attention to effectively follow-up to those recommendations and in consultation with Civil Society.

II. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

9. This NGO coalition welcomes the acceptance of recommendation n. 26.313,¹ “to take further robust and comprehensive measures to promote wider and equitable access to quality education at all levels” (Botswana).

Primary Education:

10. With regards to primary school, the US government has made an attempt to implement measures that make education free and accessible to all, by offering [school vouchers](#)² for public and charter schools³. While the U.S. has policies aimed at promoting regular school attendance, challenges persist, including declining school enrollment and disparities in attendance rates among different school types and demographics. Such challenges risks to be exacerbated by the current potential threat of public education being defunded.

11. Additionally, the efforts to dismantle the U.S. Education Department⁴ are placing students from low income backgrounds, disabled students, English Language Learners, racial and ethnic minorities in a vulnerable position. For instance, the reduction of the management⁵ of a department like the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) deprives these vulnerable children of adequate support from the federal government to complete and succeed in their education.⁶

12. The NCES plays a vital role in identifying schools eligible for programs like the REAP (Rural Education Achievement Program), which provides funds to rural and low-income schools, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This department allocates over \$15 billion annually to support 7.4 million students with disabilities⁷. Without adequate financial support from the Department of Education, these programs may face disruptions, leaving vulnerable students without the resources they need.

¹Recommendation n. 26.313: Take further robust and comprehensive measures to promote wider and equitable access to quality education at all levels” (Botswana). UN Doc. A/HRC/46/15 (15 December 2020).

² <https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/types-of-school-choice/what-are-school-vouchers-2/>

³*Charter school*: "A school that is paid for with public money but is organized by a private group for a special purpose and admits only students who meet its standards." *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/charter-school>.

⁴Trump's Schools: Education Department Cuts for Low-Income Students. *NPR*. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/21/nx-s1-5330917/trump-schools-education-department-cuts-low-income>. “The U.S. Secretary of Education, Linda McMahon, is ‘tak[ing] all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the Department of Education,” and to do so “to the maximum extent appropriate and permitted by law.”

⁵Trump's Schools: Education Department Cuts for Low-Income Students. *NPR*. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/21/nx-s1-5330917/trump-schools-education-department-cuts-low-income>.

⁶Trump's Schools: Education Department Cuts for Low-Income Students. *NPR*. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/21/nx-s1-5330917/trump-schools-education-department-cuts-low-income>. “At the start of the year, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) employed more than 100 people. On Friday [March 21, 2025,] all but three employees will be placed on administrative leave, and eventually laid off.”

⁷Department of Education Resources for Disabled Children. *CNN*. Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/03/22/us/departments-of-education-resources-disabled-children/index.html>.

13. Furthermore, the reduction of NCES functions could lead to significant data gaps, hindering the ability to track and address disparities in education⁸. The NCES provides crucial insights and guidance to local leaders, ensuring they have the tools necessary to plan budgets effectively and allocate resources equitably for each school year. Without this support, schools will struggle to meet the needs of their students.

14. The initiative to defund the Department of Education aims to redistribute "the department's federal programs and money to other agencies and the states."⁹ However, education advocates fear that states may misallocate these funds and fail to adequately serve children, particularly those with disabilities or from low-income communities. Ultimately, the role of the Department of Education is to "institute guardrails, investments, and protections 'that support equal outcomes for students.'¹⁰ and by dismantling it would place these vulnerable groups in a more precarious situation.

Communities Disproportionately Affected by Absenteeism:

15. **Racial and Ethnic Minorities:** Black, Native American, and Pacific Islander students have the highest rates of chronic absenteeism, with rates exceeding 40% in the 2021–22 school year. Latino students also saw a significant increase, with absenteeism rates more than doubling from around 13% in 2018–19 to approximately 35% three years later.¹¹

16. **Students in Low-Income Communities:** Students from low-income backgrounds often face challenges such as inadequate transportation, health issues, and unstable housing, contributing to higher absenteeism rates.

Populations with Less Access to Quality Education:

17. To make matters worse the students from low-income and minority backgrounds attend public schools that lack essential resources, including advanced coursework, experienced educators, and adequate facilities. This disparity limits students' opportunities that can set them up for the potential of accessing institutions, colleges and universities of higher caliber, and perpetuates educational inequities.¹²

⁸Trump's Schools: Education Department Cuts for Low-Income Students (Duplicate). *NPR*. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/21/nx-s1-5330917/trump-schools-education-department-cuts-low-income>.

⁹ Trump Orders a Plan to Close Education Department – An Anthropologist Who Studies MAGA Explains 4 Reasons Why Trump and His Supporters Want to Eliminate It." *The Conversation*. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/trump-orders-a-plan-to-close-education-department-an-anthropologist-who-studies-maga-explains-4-reasons-why-trump-and-his-supporters-want-to-eliminate-it-248818>.

¹⁰ Trump Administration Moves Forward with Education Department Layoffs and Closure." *AP News*. Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/trump-education-department-layoffs-closure-c7cddd1dbf310dadcd70e003d62a6df0>.

¹¹Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). Available at: <https://www.ppic.org>.

¹²National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI). Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>.

18. This leads to higher drop out at higher education rates, especially due to lack of financial and often familial support. Children that dropout of school have lower probabilities of finding jobs later on in life. Consequently, they are more prone to financial insecurity in their lives.

19. Disparities can also be visibly seen upon the comparison of public and private schools; though they vary, depending on the level of affluence of the area. Private schools have a reputation of being better than public ones. However, if a child lives in a wealthy region, the public schools and even private schools in that area are potentially of higher caliber because their parents have more financial means to contribute to the school and provide a wider variety of opportunities for students.

20. Another vulnerable group is English Language Learners (ELLs), many who are migrants¹³. They often encounter insufficient language support services, hindering their ability to fully engage with the curriculum and affecting their overall academic performance.

Access to higher education:

21. As it pertains to access to receiving higher education, we acknowledge that with measures through like– The [Income-Driven Repayment Plans](#), and Federal Student Debt Forgiveness Program for public-service workers, \$69.2 billion in student debt for 946,000 borrowers was forgiven¹⁴. However, upon the potential interruption of these programs¹⁵, over 3.6 million public servants and a number of students would suffer because it would create yet another barrier to even consider taking on a loan to pay for their education in the first place.

Human Rights Education and Trainings:

22. The population, especially children, have insufficient knowledge and understanding of their own rights and how to claim them, even in the face of gross and blatant human rights violations. Deep discrimination exists against people of low socioeconomic status, many who happen to be immigrant children don't know how to stand up for their rights and end up being taken advantage of. For example, in the U.S. alone, approximately 48% of "American Indian/Alaska Native households do not have access to clean water or adequate sanitation."¹⁶ A similar situation also applies to other vulnerable communities (i.e. African-American, Latino, indigenous). Yet, at present, human rights awareness-raising campaigns are insufficient to reach

¹³ English Learners May Feel Under Attack. Teachers Can Help Ease Their Fear." Education Week. Available at: <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-english-learners-may-feel-under-attack-teachers-can-help-ease-their-fear/2025/03>.

¹⁴Project 2025 and Higher Education. *National Education Association (NEA)*. Available at: <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/project-2025-and-higher-education>.

¹⁵Trump Administration Suspends Some Student Loan Repayment Plans." *East County Magazine*. Available at: <https://www.eastcountymagazine.org/trump-administration-suspends-some-student-loan-repayment-plans>.

¹⁶ (Children's Environmental Health Network)

all parts of the country and human rights education is not systematically integrated in school curricula.

23. That the Convention on the Rights of the Child is not part of the school program. In some cases, human rights are integrated into Catholic school education as part of Catholic Social Teaching and these are taught in religion classes and social studies classes. Some training is provided to teachers on human rights though this is not all-encompassing. These initiatives, mostly limited to private schools, remain insufficient and often do not reach out the most vulnerable communities, which are affected by human rights violations.

24. This NGO coalition recommends the U.S. government to:

- A. Reinstate the Department of Education at the federal level, or ensure stronger oversight at the state level to guarantee proper management and allocation of educational funds.***
- B. Increase funding for public schools in underserved communities as a means to increase sensitization for parents to provide their children with equitable access to quality education.***
- C. Implement comprehensive strategies to address barriers to regular school attendance, including targeted interventions for communities disproportionately impacted by absenteeism, ensuring equitable access to education for all students.***
- D. Integrate human rights education into public school curricula to foster awareness, empathy, and global citizenship among students.***
- E. Support initiatives aimed at student loan forgiveness, reducing the financial burden on graduates and creating greater opportunities for economic mobility.***

III. RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

25. This NGO coalition welcomes the acceptance of recommendation n. 26.223 to “take concrete measures to eliminate racial profiling by law enforcement officials and conduct credible investigations into arbitrary executions of people of African descent” (Angola)¹⁷.

26. In fact, in line with the recommendation to “work across federal agencies and departments to foster more comprehensive education and training for state and local agencies and officials on

¹⁷Recommendation No. 26.223. “Take concrete measures to eliminate racial profiling by law enforcement officials and conduct credible investigations into arbitrary executions of people of African descent.” See Report of the UPR Working Group on the USA, UN Doc. A/HRC/46/15 (Angola). (15 December 2020).

human rights”,¹⁸ there have been efforts to enhance **human rights education and training**. Overall, the United States has undertaken several initiatives to address racial discrimination and enhance human rights education for law enforcement officers, aligning with recommendations from the previous Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of 2020.

27. In particular, the government has created the following Federal Initiatives:

- **Policy Reforms:** The U.S. has accepted recommendations to incorporate human rights training and education into its policies.
- **Legislative Efforts:** The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, introduced in 2020, aims to implement comprehensive police reforms. Provisions include restricting the transfer of military equipment to police, mandating anti-discrimination policies and training programs, and prohibiting chokeholds and no-knock warrants. While the act has not been enacted into law, it reflects a legislative effort to address systemic issues in policing.

28. Local and State Initiatives:

- **Minneapolis:** Following the murder of George Floyd in 2020, Minneapolis agreed to a settlement with the federal government to reform police training and use-of-force policies. The agreement emphasizes the sanctity of human life and includes measures against racial discrimination and excessive force.¹⁹
- **Louisville:** In response to the 2020 killing of Breonna Taylor, Louisville, Kentucky, entered into a consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice. This mandates comprehensive reforms, including enhanced training focused on de-escalation and oversight by an independent monitor.²⁰
- **Antioch:** The Antioch Police Department in California agreed to reforms after a federal investigation uncovered racially discriminatory practices. The department committed to hiring a consultant to review its policies and mandated its Police Oversight Commission to report demographic data related to police activities.²¹

29. Additionally, law enforcement officials receive ongoing training on how to avoid the use of excessive force. One approach that is used is the *Dynamic Resistance Response Model* which demonstrates how to respond to different degrees of situations - situations of non threatening resistance, those of threatening resistance, and situations of deadly resistance. How to respond starts with using verbal commands and escalates to using physical force and ultimately to using

¹⁸Recommendation No. 26.101. “Work across federal agencies and departments to foster more comprehensive education and training for state and local agencies and officials on human rights.” (Greece). See Report of the UPR Working Group on the USA, UN Doc. A/HRC/46/15 (15 December 2020).

¹⁹ NPR Staff, “Minneapolis Police Department Still Struggles with Use of Force, Report Finds,” *NPR*, January 7, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/01/07/g-s1-41297/minneapolis-police-training-force-policies>.

²⁰*Reuters*. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com>.

²¹ *San Francisco Chronicle*. Available at: <https://www.sfchronicle.com>.

a weapon. As a form of accountability law enforcement agencies continue to use body cameras to prevent officers using excessive force.

30. However, the inconsistent implementation of relevant UPR recommendations across federal, state, and local levels indicates the need for a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to fully realize these commitments. Ongoing collaboration and coordination between federal, state, and local entities, along with support from civil society, is essential to fully realize these recommendations. The U.S. can take the recommendation n. 26.250 by Japan²² a step further by implementing and focusing on ways to extend that human rights education to important personnel like law enforcement officers.

31. In an effort to address racial discrimination and enhance human rights education within law enforcement, we recommend the U.S. government to:

- A. Establish clearer communication channels and a more structured, coordinated approach between federal, state, and local entities, ensuring that civil society organizations are actively involved in the implementation and oversight of policies and initiatives.***
- B. Strengthen and institutionalize human rights education for law enforcement officers nationwide, ensuring consistency in training across jurisdictions and alignment with international human rights standards.***
- C. Implement concrete, enforceable measures to eradicate racial profiling, particularly against marginalized communities, by ensuring accountability mechanisms, independent oversight, and comprehensive anti-discrimination policies within law enforcement agencies.***

IV. RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS

32. This NGO coalition welcomes the acceptance of recommendation no. 26.114,²³ made in the UPR of 2020 by Switzerland to “combat all forms of discrimination by guaranteeing equitable access to justice, medical care, and quality education.” In line with that recommendation, it is important to highlight that immigrants in the U.S. are some of the most vulnerable populations with the least rights.

²² Recommendation No. 26.250. “Take further measures to realize its commitment to eliminating racial discrimination, including by providing human rights education to law enforcement officers.” (Japan). See Report of the UPR Working Group on the USA, UN Doc. A/HRC/46/15 (15 December 2020).

²³ Recommendation No. 26.2114. “Resolutely combat all forms of discrimination by guaranteeing equitable access to justice, medical care and quality education, as well as by ensuring that the use of force and firearms by the police is in compliance with human rights.” (Switzerland). See Report of the UPR Working Group on the USA, UN Doc. A/HRC/46/15 (15 December 2020).

33. Accordingly, there have been civil society efforts towards spreading information to help immigrants. Different Archdioceses and dioceses have prepared information, local news, and flyers to keep their parishioners -often migrants- informed of their rights. They have also organized informative sessions and provided access to legal counselling to keep migrants informed of their rights. A recent panel with the Archdiocese of San Antonio including the Mayor and Sheriff in which they share the situation and try to dispel the fear that has been created in the community. There are continued efforts from bishops to continue working with the government and implement policies to work towards the human rights of each person regardless of immigration status. However, the government provides little to no protection.

34. Actions such as canceling the appointment system for those obtaining asylum—leaving over 500,000 individuals in legal limbo, the attempt to enforce the Alien Enemy Act²⁴, the arrest of immigrants with no criminal background²⁵, the push to end Temporary Protected Status²⁶, and the limitation of work permits²⁷ make it increasingly difficult for immigrants and asylum seekers to coexist lawfully. These measures not only undermine human rights, but also create challenges for sanctuary cities,²⁸ who are under attack as well, which strive to provide protection and opportunities for immigrants to integrate into society with dignity.

35. **Members of immigrant families** are of the most vulnerable, especially the children. It is important to note that, “one in four children aged 18 and under living in the U.S. has at least one immigrant parent.”²⁹ This is a cause of concern because if a minor citizen child’s parent is deported to their country of origin, they face the possibility of ending up in social services, or the citizen child having to relocate to a country they have no clue about. Children of migrants are even stopped from pursuing higher education as the information that they input into the federal database to receive governmental aid might be used against their parents³⁰.

²⁴Trump is using the Alien Enemies Act to deport immigrants. *The Conversation*. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/trump-is-using-the-alien-enemies-act-to-deport-immigrants-but-the-18th-century-law-has-been-invoked-only-during-times-of-war-252434>.

²⁵Trump’s Mass Deportation Arrests of Non-Criminal Immigrants. *NPR*. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/04/nx-s1-5282379/trumps-mass-deportation-arrests-of-non-criminal-immigrants-no-criminal-record>

²⁶Trump Temporary Protected Status Immigrants. *9News*. Available at: <https://www.9news.com/article/news/local/next/next-with-kyle-clark/trump-temporary-protected-status-immigrants/73-6d68a325-71b2-4cbf-b4e0-b60ef530446a>.

²⁷Donald Trump Immigration Executive Orders (Duplicate). *ProPublica*. Available at: <https://www.propublica.org/article/donald-trump-immigration-executive-orders>.

²⁸ *Sanctuary Cities Debate*. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* - *ProCon*. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/procon/sanctuary-cities-debate>.

²⁹ *Immigration Status and the Healthcare Access and Health of Children of Immigrants*. *Social Science Quarterly*. Wiley Online Library. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ssqu.12261>.

³⁰ FAFSA Mess Leaves Mixed-Status Families in Limbo as School Year Looms. *The Washington Post*. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2024/07/19/fafsa-mess-leaves-mixed-status-families-limbo-school-year-looms/>.

36. These families suffer even more because, in mixed-status households, the member who is an immigrant, is unable to access essential benefits like retirement, welfare, health care, disability services, public or assisted housing, postsecondary education, food assistance, and unemployment benefits. This lack of access to governmental assistance places an even greater burden on providers. With regards to healthcare, immigrants are limited to only receiving emergency Medicaid benefits for services needed for the treatment of an emergency medical condition”³¹ placing the responsibility for their care on their children or on other sources of incomes, sometimes illegal, to afford care.

37. **Migrant children**, especially those **with disabilities**, are among the most vulnerable. They often find themselves with limited or no protection, struggling to access basic services such as healthcare, education, and legal assistance. Hence, their situation, exacerbated by systemic barriers, hinder their ability to thrive, creating a cycle of disadvantage that is difficult to escape.

38. Children who are recipients of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) can continue their studies and work lawfully, but this program is under constant threat and it has been capped to children who arrived until 2021, and does not offer a permanent pathway to citizenship. As a result, there are 850,000 children under 18 who are unauthorized immigrants in the U.S.³².

39. The fear of an uncertain future weighs heavily on them, especially as they grow older and begin to confront the limitations of their temporary status. Consequently, once they become **youth**, they are left in a complex and fragile situation. They are offered little security, and even less of a stable foundation for building a hopeful future. Additionally, their access to health care is limited as only 14 plus DC out of 50 states provides full healthcare coverage.³³

40. As it pertains to education, migrant children can access primary education for free. The question now is not access but rather the fear associated to attending school. Many families “don’t know that schools are protected spaces or have a clear sense of their legal rights, and that might lead them to hide, not seek help or services, and/or not send their kids to school.”³⁴ Additionally their access to higher education becomes limited because most schools charge

³¹ *The Migrant Crisis and Access to Health Care*. PubMed Central (PMC). National Center for Biotechnology Information. Available at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9621574/>.

³² *What We Know About Unauthorized Immigrants Living in the U.S.* Pew Research Center. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/07/22/what-we-know-about-unauthorized-immigrants-living-in-the-us/>.

³³ *Children of Immigrants: Key Facts on Health Coverage and Care*. Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF). Available at: [https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/children-of-immigrants-key-facts-on-health-coverage-and-care/#:~:text=As%20of%20January%202025%2C%2037,immigration%20status%20\(Figure%204\).](https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/children-of-immigrants-key-facts-on-health-coverage-and-care/#:~:text=As%20of%20January%202025%2C%2037,immigration%20status%20(Figure%204).)

³⁴ *Immigration Enforcement and U.S. Schools: What Could Happen and What Education Leaders Can Do*. Brookings Institution. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/immigration-enforcement-and-u-s-schools-what-could-happen-and-what-education-leaders-can-do/>.

immigrants out of state tuition³⁵, which nearly doubles the normal cost of in-state tuition and are ineligible to receive Federal aid to afford the tuition.

41. The above mentioned situations are in opposition with the human rights framework according to which, regardless of legal status, migrants should have access to justice, education, and healthcare. They should have access to basic rights without constantly living in fear.

42. To address the ongoing human rights challenges faced by migrants, we recommend the United States of America to:

- A. Undertaken widespread and systematic human rights awareness campaigns to stop stigmatization, hate speech and defamation against migrants.***
- B. Strengthen partnership with civil society actors who are implementing concrete actions to assist migrants in transitioning into life in the United States.***
- C. Create a clear, accessible pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, especially those who have contributed to the economy and society, including by expanding protections for DACA recipients, allowing them to continue to live and work without fear of deportation.***
- D. Implement comprehensive immigration reform that addresses border security, visa policies, and provides fair processes for asylum seekers and refugees, ensuring that legal immigration processes are more accessible and efficient.***
- E. Provide programs that support the integration of immigrants into the workforce through language and skill development, as well as access to job opportunities.***

³⁵ *How Undocumented Students Can Get College Financial Aid*. U.S. News & World Report. Available at: <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/paying-for-college/articles/how-undocumented-students-can-get-college-financial-aid>.