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## **Florida Faith and Immigrant Leaders Condemn Gov. DeSantis Sending Asylum Seekers to Martha's Vineyard**

*“Governor DeSantis, you need to REPENT!” - Agustin Quiles, Government Affairs Director at the Florida Fellowship of Hispanic Councils and Evangelical Institutions (FRACEEV)*

[Link to Facebook live recording.](#)  
[Link to photos from the event.](#)

**Orlando, FL** — Today, as [Governor DeSantis announced](#) his intent to continue indiscriminately flying undocumented refugees to other states, The [American Business Immigration Coalition Action](#), [Casa de Venezuela Orlando](#), the [HOPE Community Center](#), and the [Florida Immigrant Coalition](#) joined Florida faith leaders to denounce Governor DeSantis' blatant disregard for human life with his ongoing policy of flying asylum seekers across the country, using them as political pawns.

“Our community has a profound feeling of pain. We feel abandoned by our Governor. Governor DeSantis,” said **Agustin Quiles**, Director of Government Affairs for the conservative Florida Fellowship of Hispanic Councils and Evangelical Institutions (FRACEEV). He continued, “From the 1.2 million Latino Evangelicals and the 2,500 churches we represent have been your friend over the last four years, but we are extremely disappointed in these actions and will remember in 6 weeks so that you do not continue to humiliate us. Governor DeSantis, you need to repent!”

Other faith leaders echoed Quiles' sentiments. “By breath, by blood, by body, by spirit, we are all one! I think Jesus would be crying. Jesus transformed communities with simple, forgotten and unaccepted people into communities of love and congeniality,” said HOPE Community Center Founder **Sister Ann Kendrick**. “We thank the good, hard working people of Martha's Vineyard, who are immigrants who came from the Azores and labored in whaling ships, for stepping up and helping those immigrants who were lied to.”

Episcopal Priest **Jose Rodriguez** also called out the Governor's lack of Christian compassion. "The promise that America made to the world in the Statue of Liberty is a promise that stands. This is about taking our shared fabric of migration, one that Christ himself advanced. Governor DeSantis acted against Him and against the history and christian values that tell us to bring aid to the weary," said **Rodriguez**. "In sending migrants to Martha's Vineyard, Governor DeSantis neither showed American values nor Christian values. He showed that the boogeyman still exists."

Speakers at the event enumerated the problems with this policy, not only because of its cruelty, but also because of the immense strain it puts on Florida's economy.

"Our business coalition finds Governor DeSantis' recent political stunt of sending two planes full of migrants to Martha's Vineyard morally repulsive and economically unreasonable," said ABIC Action Florida State Director **Samuel Vilchez Santiago**. He continued, "How do Floridians benefit from this stunt? If anything, it makes things worse for all of us. Throughout Florida history, immigrants have strengthened our economy. We fill critical labor shortages in key industries, from healthcare and hospitality to farming and technology. Our businesses are in dire need of new workers, and these migrants he sent off come here to work. We also help create new jobs. Just here in Orlando, 36 percent of our business owners and entrepreneurs are immigrants."

### **Additional statements**

**Casa de Venezuela Network Founder William Diaz:** "This is a nation of immigrants. The Governor's family comes from Italy. How are Venezuelans different? This is an attack on our community that we won't forget about. This is not a partisan issue; Americans of all backgrounds support asylum seekers, including Venezuelans who are escaping Maduro's brutal dictatorship."

**HOPE CommUnity Center Executive Director Felipe Souza-Lazaballet:** "While the governor claims he is protecting families and children, he chooses to attack some of the most vulnerable members of our community - asylum seekers. It's time for the governor to stop using immigrants' lives as a political football."

**Florida Immigrant Spokesperson Stephanie Wall:** "Why does this feel so wrong? Because it is wrong. Governor De Santis this is anti-family, anti-freedom, anti-faith and anti-opportunity."

### **Background**

On Wednesday night, Governor DeSantis announced that he had sent two planes full of immigrants to Martha's Vineyard, utilizing part of the \$12 million in tax-payer dollars allocated earlier by the legislature for the relocation of immigrants. Most of these

migrants were Venezuelan asylum seekers, including children. This follows earlier comments made by Lieutenant Governor Jeannette Nuñez about the possibility of bussing Cuban migrants from Florida to Delaware.

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## **ABOUT**

The [American Business Immigration Coalition Action \(ABIC Action\)](#) was created to mobilize the power of American businesses and the general public to promote and advocate for sensible immigration solutions. ABIC Action works to develop and advocate for legislation, regulations, and government programs that promote common sense state and federal immigration reform to benefit the people and economy of our country. ABIC Action coordinates leadership among American businesses to provide a strong and effective voice in the national immigration conversation with the ultimate goal of passing sensible immigration policies.

[Casa de Venezuela Orlando](#) has supported Central Florida's growing Venezuelan community for the last 20 years through community service, civic engagement efforts, and information campaigns, seeking to build an integrated community that succeeds socially, politically, and economically.

[The Florida Immigrant Coalition](#) (FLIC) is a statewide coalition of more than 65 member organizations and over 100 allies, founded in 1998 and formally incorporated in 2004. We are led by our membership, including grassroots and community organizations, farmworkers, youth, advocates, lawyers, union members, and more.

[Hope CommUnity Center](#) fosters diverse, empowered, learning communities engaged in personal and societal transformation across Central Florida. Through service and advocacy, we stand together with immigrants and others who are tenacious and courageous in the face of all systems of oppression.

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