After the Supreme Court’s split decision in June 2016, when President Obama’s DAPA and expanded DACA programs were blocked, action on immigration had been stalled—until, that is, the January inauguration of the 45th president. Since January 20, there has been a flurry of activity around immigration and refugees. President Trump signed executive orders on January 25 to enable construction of a wall at the US and Mexico border, increase border patrol forces and immigration officers, withhold federal grant funding for sanctuary cities, and increase deportations of undocumented immigrants.

That same week, President Trump signed an executive order for a temporary ban of refugees awaiting resettlement in the US, a ban that prohibits all Syrian refugees until further notice. It also bans citizens of seven majority Muslim countries from entering the US on a Visa. This created chaos at US airports, resulting in protests and court action. A Washington State federal judge quickly put a temporary halt to Trump’s ban, which was affirmed on February 9th by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Then, the same week the “Travel Ban” was being decided in court, ICE conducted deportation round-ups in 7 major cities around the country, detaining over 600 people in a week’s time. It is unclear whether ICE was continuing its policy to search for undocumented with criminal offenses or if this action reflected a change in policy. What is clear is that these round-ups done in the current political climate have created a tremendous amount of fear within immigrant communities.

Activity in Illinois
In response to Trump’s actions, there has been a lot of activity in the Illinois General Assembly, with proposals from inviting Mexico’s President Pena Nieto to Illinois to increasing immigrant protections in the state. Here are some bills currently being supported by Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR):

The Immigration Safe Zones Act (HB 426)—Would protect state funded schools, universities, and healthcare facilities from allowing access to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or agencies working on behalf of ICE without a valid court-issued warrant. It also prevents schools and universities from asking students or their families about immigration status, with some exceptions.

The Illinois TRUST Act (HB 3099)—Seeks to protect and build trust between law enforcement agencies and immigrant communities by limiting police involvement in federal immigration enforcement.

The Student Access Bill (HB 2934)—Would provide 4-year public universities with the legal authority to provide financial aid to undocumented students who qualify for in-state tuition and protect scholarship eligibility for students convicted of possessing or selling illegal drugs.

Additionally, immigrant and refugee rights groups and the ACLU have been getting out the word and offering programs on “Know Your Rights” and what to do if ICE comes to your door to immigrant communities around the state.

Outlook
It is difficult to know what to expect in the current political climate. Chicago is a sanctuary city and is one of 5 cities and 2 counties in IL to claim that status. The future is uncertain for DACA recipients and other undocumented in IL and in the US. Refugee families are also facing uncertainties, especially those who still have relatives in those countries identified in the so-called “Muslim Ban.” Additionally, because the current Administration is targeting Mexico, undocumented—primarily from our neighbors to the south, and Muslims, there has been a rise in hate crimes against these groups, which is extremely disconcerting.