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Blueprint for Immigrant New York

New York's Story

For generations, immigrants have been a lifeline for New York State, helping it thrive. From building the Erie Canal, connecting the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean, to powering the booming industries of Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo and so many towns and cities in between, immigrants have been at the center of the state's economic growth. When industries changed and upstate populations declined, immigrant and refugee communities provided an essential buffer, helping to support and sustain New York's "heartland." In Utica, the significant refugee population (one out of every four residents is a refugee) helped preserve areas facing economic decline and in Buffalo, middle-class immigrants strengthened housing and retail markets in aging suburban neighborhoods.²

Despite this rich history, New York is not capitalizing fully on what immigrants can contribute to their communities and the state. For example, many immigrants lack access to vocational and technical education necessary to help local and regional economies improve. With unpredictable threats to New York's economy from the Federal government, now is a particularly important time for the state to exercise leadership and pursue leading-edge policies on behalf of immigrant New Yorkers.

This *Blueprint for Immigrant New York* is a vision and plan to help immigrant New Yorkers, and ultimately the state at large, achieve its full potential.

New York is Falling Behind on Immigrant Integration

Almost one in four New Yorkers is an immigrant: the state is home to more than 4.5 million immigrants³, a number that is only growing. New York's immigrant communities are unique in their diversity—nearly a third of New York's immigrants are Latino, one quarter are Asian American and more than one fifth are either Caribbean

or African. Regions outside of New York City are home to the vast majority of New York's newly resettled refugees⁴, a population that is even more diverse, arriving from Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Burma, to name a few of the origin countries⁵.

Immigrant New Yorkers are an integral part of their communities and of their local and our state's economy. Immigrants generate an estimated \$230 billion in economic output in New York⁶. Immigrants are nearly twice as likely as individuals born in the United States to start a business⁷ and in New York, immigrant-owned businesses and firms alone generated more than \$6 billion in business income in 2014 and employed nearly half a million New Yorkers. Immigration has also been demonstrated to boost housing values across New York State⁸.

Almost 1 in 4 New Yorkers is an immigrant*

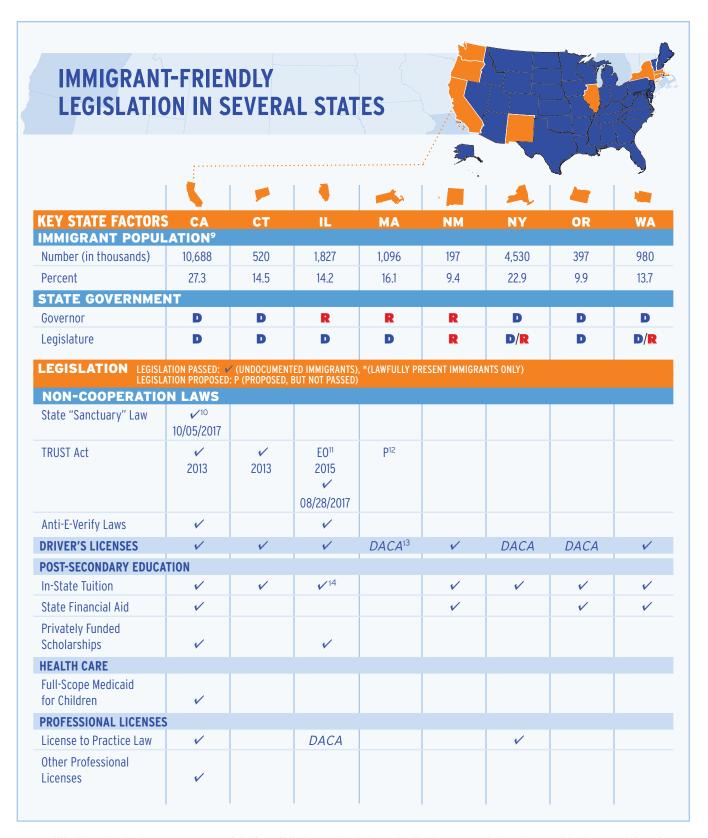


The NYIC interprets the word "immigrant" broadly to encompass immigrants, refugees, and asylees, and to welcome all newcomers to New York.

Yet, despite the number of foreign born residents approaching 25% of the state's population and the significant contributions of these communities, New York lags behind other states in passing legislation to support immigrant success, thus inhibiting its own success as a state. Utah has extended driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants and Illinois has expanded financial aid to undocumented students and recently passed a TRUST Act. By contrast, New York has failed to pass driver's license legislation, expand financial aid to undocumented students, or pass the Liberty Act (similar to TRUST Acts, which are a comprehensive group of policies limiting the scope of local agencies' ability to engage in information collection and other activities that support immigration enforcement). The lack of policy wins is compounded by inadequate implementation of the policies and laws that New York does have on the books. For example, the State's Executive Order 26 on Language Access does not meet the needs of diverse populations, particularly refugees in upstate New York, despite the essential role language access and access to English language classes play in ensuring immigrant success.

To understand how New York compares to other states, the chart on the next page highlights several states' records on immigrant-friendly legislation.





While the chart above covers legislation, it is important to note that New York has been able to enact immigrant-friendly policies through agency rulemaking, the most significant example being healthcare coverage for undocumented young immigrants.

Why has New York Fallen Behind?

A combination of reasons has contributed to New York's inability to pass legislation to promote immigrant integration. The first factor is political challenges in Albany: while New York is considered a progressive state, in reality the state's politics are far more complex. Progressive policy campaigns are stymied by the challenging dynamic among the State's Democratic Governor, Democrat controlled Assembly, and Republican controlled Senate, which includes a group of breakaway Democrats who caucus with Republicans.

A second key factor is the lack of a significant statewide base of support for integration policies. While some counties in New York State have local champions for the immigrant community, this is not the norm throughout the state. The absence of such a wide base of support in communities across the state has allowed certain legislators to avoid supporting and voting for immigrant integration policies.

This became clear during the 2005-2007 campaign to make driver's licenses accessible to undocumented immigrants. Following an active campaign that the NYIC helped lead, in September 2007 then-Governor Spitzer issued an Executive Order requiring driver's licenses to be provided to undocumented immigrants. What followed was public condemnation from state electeds and county clerks outside of New York City. These included both Republicans and Democrats, such as current Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, in areas where local support for the immigrant community was absent. The inadequate statewide base of local leaders and other supporters allowed for hysteria in these communities to go unchecked and eventually caused Governor Spitzer to rescind his Executive Order. The immediate and overwhelming backlash against the Executive Order continues to have ripple effects, hampering bold advocacy efforts in the state to this day.

A third factor has been the bottleneck caused by the New York State DREAM Act, which would expand financial aid awards, including the New York State Tuition Assistance Program, to undocumented students. Legislators have singularly focused on DREAM, while concomitantly refusing to move forward any other piece of immigrant integration legislation. The result is that New York's DREAM Act has now failed to pass for five consecutive years and no other significant pieces of legislation have gained needed traction during that time frame. Advocates realized that the DREAM Act campaign had not been able to adequately engage local partners and communities in upstate regions, in part because there was no local infrastructure that could adequately ensure such engagement. The dearth of sufficient statewide support was also felt most recently when Governor Cuomo introduced the Excelsior Scholarship program. Excelsior explicitly excludes undocumented immigrants, despite the advocacy efforts of groups throughout the state, including the NYIC, to expand these scholarships.

The Increased Cost of Falling Behind

New York's inability to champion immigrant integration policies has real economic and social costs, particularly right now, with anti-immigrant rhetoric, hate crimes, and draconian federal policies creating a tremendously hostile climate for immigrant and refugee communities. Problems that immigrant communities have faced for years are more pressing: the reality of commuting to work or driving to a doctor's appointment without a driver's license today is far more chilling than it was only a few months ago. Simultaneously, New York is losing out on an estimated \$57 million in annual government revenues, plus \$26 million in one-time revenues by not expanding driver's licenses to undocumented individuals.¹5 Driver's licenses are one of countless missed opportunities for the state to help immigrants succeed and strengthen its economy through cutting-edge immigrant integration policies. Another example is "brain waste": a recent analysis by the Migration Policy Institute found that 27 percent of immigrants in the state are underemployed, which results in \$5 billion in lost earnings and nearly \$600 million in lost state and local tax revenue.¹6

In the context of a federal administration committed to anti-immigrant policies and cutting state funds for a variety of social services, New York can no longer afford such missed opportunities. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals is a significant example of impending social and economic costs facing New York: DACA recipients are valuable members of their community and contribute \$140 million to state and local taxes. The termination of this program would place approximately 50,000 New Yorkers in a state of fear and cost the state \$55 million.¹⁷ The

Affordable Care Act is another similar example, the dismantling of which would have severe social and economic consequences for countless New Yorkers and would cost the state billions of dollars in federal funding.

While the need for comprehensive policy solutions at the federal level remains acute, any legislative solution would likely come with significant and perhaps unacceptable compromises. New York does not have the luxury of waiting: the state not only has the ability, but the responsibility to protect and ensure the wellbeing of its immigrant communities right now. With these new social and economic threats to the state also come new opportunities to pursue bold, positive solutions to help immigrant New Yorkers succeed, and put the state on the map as a leader.

From Frederick Douglass publishing his abolitionist newspaper, the *North Star*, in Rochester, to the Seneca Falls Convention, New York has historically played an integral role in social justice movements in the United States. These movements began with robust grassroots activism and, albeit slowly, effected positive changes in policy. New York was not always the first to act, yet its actions have historically set the pace for countless vital issues. Lagging behind states like Wyoming for instance, New York was surely not the first state to grant suffrage to women. However, after New York passed universal women's suffrage, the momentum of the movement grew significantly. Although we are trailing with regard to immigrant integration, this is the moment for the home of the nation's second largest immigrant population to not only catch up to states like Utah, Illinois or California, but to exceed them.

An Opportunity for Progress: Blueprint for Immigrant New York

We are in a pivotal moment for New York State—one year after the presidential election and one year before our state's gubernatorial race. We have the opportunity to lay out a proactive, actionable policy agenda, to envision what our state has the potential to achieve for its immigrant communities, and to collectively commit to realizing that vision. As a statewide coalition, the NYIC is uniquely positioned to align our member organizations and partners around a long-term strategy, a **Blueprint for Immigrant New York**. Taking lessons from states like California, Washington, and Connecticut, and even from the failed campaigns in our own state, we can ensure that over the next decade, New York becomes a place where its immigrants can truly thrive and contribute to the economic and cultural vitality of the state.

Blueprint: Phase I

To capitalize on this opportunity, we need not only an ambitious vision but also a clear set of achievable short and long term goals. Phase I of the Blueprint process has been exactly this: an opportunity to think big and bold, clarifying for ourselves and external partners why we are partaking in this effort and developing exactly what our vision and goals are for New York. We have engaged in an extensive process over the past few months to ensure that what we have drafted is truly representative of the varied needs of diverse immigrant communities. We have solicited and received feedback on the Blueprint from almost 200 individuals and organizations, including members, partners, academics, and government officials. We did so through a multitude of ways: hosted multiple small group meetings on specific issue areas, such as health and education; engaged our membership in different regions of the state through 9 roundtables; and held 1:1 phone calls with countless individuals.

This process has also helped us refine our thinking on what integration means for different communities. We believe that immigrant integration is inevitably a spectrum, ranging from basic survival needs such as driver's licenses to meaningful opportunities that enable immigrants to thrive, like workforce development programs. Integration begins with equitable access to basic rights and services that allow communities to safely live in New York. But integration is not complete and cannot be fully realized until there is success in that access and immigrant communities are able to thrive rather than solely survive. Accordingly, our goals and vision in the Blueprint are organized across this spectrum, from Access & Equity to Success. Assignment to one category or the other is not fixed: while all of the policies outlined are essential to integration, a workforce development program may be just as vital to one's ability to survive as a driver's license. Our aim is simply to visualize the different kinds of issues that affect immigrants' ability to integrate.





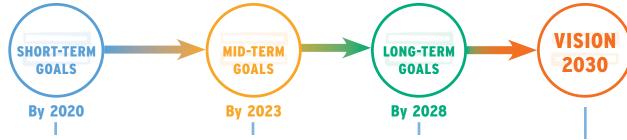
ACCESS & EQUITY: Immigrant New Yorkers, like all others, are able to safely live in New York.

SUCCESS: Meaningful avenues exist for immigrants to succeed, which benefits not only them, but New York as a whole.

ACCESS & EQUITY



Equal Opportunity



Expand
Executive Order 26 to
include additional languages
to account for linguistic diversity
across the state, particularly to serve
resettled refugee communities with
distinct language needs.

Issue driver's licenses irrespective of immigration status.

Pass "SWEAT" Securing Wages Earned Against Theft to ensure that workers can collect on wage theft judgments. Codify Executive
Order 26 into law and
create an oversight body to
ensure uniform adherence to
state and local language access
protections, as well as Title VI
of the federal Civil Rights
Act protections.

Guarantee fair labor and wage protections for farmworkers in NYS.

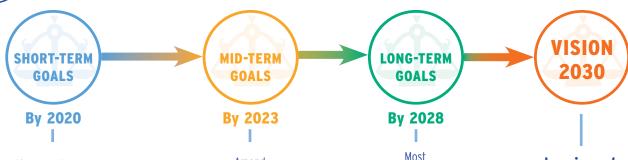
Amend
NYS Workers'
Compensation law to
ensure greater access to
medical care and workers'
compensation benefits for
low-wage, immigrant
workers.

Strengthen enforcement of NYS labor laws in industries that disproportionately employ immigrants i.e. farms. Immigrant
New Yorkers
have equal
opportunity
to access local
and state
services and are
protected from
exploitation.

ACCESS & EQUITY



Fairness in the Justice System



Codify Executive Order
170 by amending New York
State law so that state and local law
enforcement agencies may not stop,
question, investigate or arrest a person
based on perceived immigration status
or suspected violation of federal
immigration law;

Codify Executive
Order 170 by amending New
York State law to require state and
local agencies and their employees,
to maintain the confidentiality of
immigration status information and other
information unless the individual has
given consent or unless required
by federal law;

\$20 Million for legal services to fund the Legal Defense Project, including \$10 Million in new funding to be allocated through a competitive process.

\$1 Million for a Crisis Response hotline connecting immigrants to attorneys when they are about to have an interaction with immigration enforcement.

Increase the Office for New American budget to \$10 Million to increase the number of opportunity centers and legal counsel as well as outreach and know your rights presentations. Amend
New York Penal
Law to reduce the
maximum prison sentence
for New York misdemeanor
offenses by one day, from
365 days to 364 days, to
avoid unnecessarily harsh
immigrant enforcement
consequences.

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Amend New
York Penal Law to
generally prohibit the
detention of individuals
based on administrativelyissued immigration detainers
and require notification to an
individual if an immigration
detainer or related
request has been
filed.

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Office of Court Administration rule preventing ICE agents from making arrests inside court buildings.

Ensure
immigration legal
defense funding is made
permanent, including
through amending the
Department of State's
mission to ensure
renewed funding.

New York
localities prohibit
any collaboration
with immigration
enforcement
agencies.

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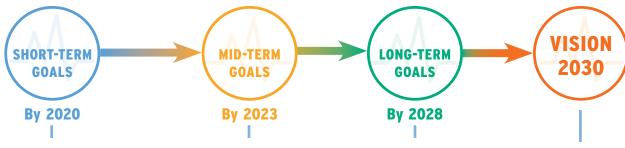
All immigrant New Yorkers have access to competent and affordable legal representation for immigration cases.

Protections for immigrant communities against over-reaching criminal operations, particularly related to gangs or terrorism.

Ensure
decriminalization of
marijuana and other
offenses that lead to
disproportionately
harsh immigration
consequences.

Immigrant
New Yorkers
have more full and
equal access to the
justice system.





Expand Child Health Plus to age 29.

Fully implement
a system of safety net
health care funding (e.g.,
Disproportionate Share Hospital and
Indigent Care Pool (ICP) payments) to
support services that are actually
for the uninsured and
Medicaid enrollees.

Stimulate
coordination among the
Office of Mental Health, the New
Americans Hotline, and New York
State's network of crisis helplines
to respond to acute distress from
federal policy changes that
affect immigrants.

Expand affordable, comprehensive health coverage to all New York State residents regardless of immigration status.

Improve the manner in which ICP funds are allocated so that payment more closely follows uninsured patients and health care providers with a mission to care for all patients are fairly remunerated.

Implement a system of monitoring and enforcement that fully realizes the intent of existing language access laws in health care settings.

Pass the New York Health Act.

Ensure that all changes to New York State's health system explicitly address care quality, access, and equity for immigrant New Yorkers. Immigrant
New Yorkers
can safely access
affordable, quality,
and equitable
healthcare that
meets their
needs.





Expand immigrant families' access to early childhood education and care across New York State through an additional investment of at least \$150M in Pre-K, with subsequent adequate annual investments, and increased subsidies for care.

Issue additional guidance and resources to districts and schools on protecting and supporting immigrant students and families in the

Increase accessibility of ELL subgroup data (e.g. ELLs with Disabilities).

Expand Governor's Excelsior scholarships to undocumented students to advance equity in access to college.

Increase Adult Literacy
Education (ALE) by \$8M (\$15.3M
total) to support Adult Basic Education
(ABE), English for Speakers of Other
Languages (ESOL) and High School
Equivalency (HSE) Prep and address
the EL/Civics to IELCE transition.

Strengthen
infrastructure
to define and deliver
quality early childhood
programs that meet Dual
Language Learners'/Emergent
Multilingual Learners' (DLLs/
EMLLs) needs.

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Win \$100M dedicated to supporting English Language /Multilingual Learners (ELLs/MLLs) for school districts throughout NYS, and make sufficient annual investments thereafter.

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Increase access to family literacy models that focus on adult immigrants' needs and goals.

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Index Adult
Literacy Education
funding to school aid
funding to allow for annual
percentage increases in
funding.

best practice
Limited English
Proficient/MLL/EMLL
instructional and family
engagement models
and techniques, including
for students receiving

special education services, have been implemented successfully in school districts

school districts and communities throughout NYS.

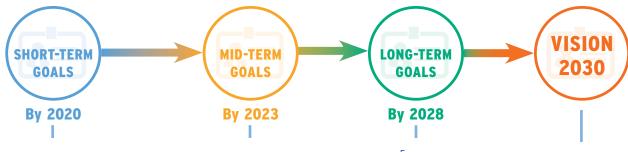
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Ensure adequate, stable resources are available for Limited English Proficient Students/MLL/EMLL/ immigrant educational needs across sectors of the education pipeline.

Ensure culturally and linguistically competent early childhood programs and care serve all interested immigrant families across New York State. Immigrant
New Yorkers
have equitable
access to quality
education from
birth-adult that
allows them
to lead more
meaningful and
successful
lives.



Economic Development



Make state professional licenses accessible to all, regardless of immigration status.

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Ensure successful implementation of the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program to appropriately meet the career training needs of mid- to highskill LEP adults.

Ensure immigrant
and refugee New Yorkers
can continue to be served by
ESOL providers and fully acquire
professional-level English skills by
allowing gains higher than
NYRS Level 6.

Expand training
opportunities for LEP
adults in fields that have an
acute need for linguistically
and culturally competent
individuals (such as early childhood
education). Couple such support
with increases to onsite
training and career
upgrade support.

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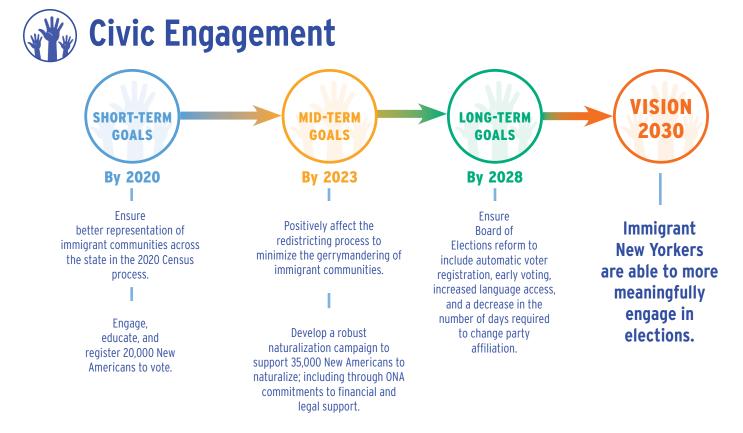
Develop
opportunities
for online learning and
English language acquisition
that incorporates an integrationfocused education on areas such
as community resources, financial
literacy, home ownership, and
career training services
and mobility.

Engage Regional
Economic Development
Councils around supporting
immigrant entrepreneurs, small
businesses, and workers through
seed funding and other capitalgenerating initiatives.

Combat "brain waste" by advancing credential recognition and re-licensing for in-need professions such as nurses and teachers and ensuring WIOA funding is used proportionately to support and develop programs that offer services geared to the specific needs of foreign-trained professionals, including advanced contextualized ESL, integrated education and training, and workforce preparation activities.

Ensure immigrant and refugee adults have multiple pathways to family-sustaining careers.

Immigrant
New Yorkers
have more access
to economic mobility,
whether through
employment or
entrepreneurship.



Blueprint: Phase II

Phase II of the Blueprint process will pivot towards the more difficult and longer term tasks of determining how to realize the goals above. How can we achieve the policies we have advocated for countless years that have stalled in Albany? This will be an opportunity for the NYIC and its members and partners to recalibrate our respective approaches to advocacy on a number of different campaigns. We will need to consider a variety of factors, such as where in the state local coalitions of organizations or local champions exist and how best to strengthen them, and how we can build bridges to receiving communities across the state and grow our network of allies. This has been a top priority for the NYIC and we have worked to build out our regional staff and capacity, placing full time staff in key areas throughout the state. We will also need to consider how best to message and frame immigrant integration campaigns and may be able to learn from counties in upstate New York where the contributions of immigrants are valued. Furthermore, we will need to examine which parts of New York have significant immigrant voting power and explore where there is potential to build this power (and subsequently what the best practices are to do so). These are some of the challenging questions we will have to answer in order to develop meaningful strategies. Yet this task is achievable: with the NYIC providing essential connective tissue across the state and in specific regions, we have faith that working collectively, we can begin achieving policy victories for the immigrant community, and for New York.

Closing

The ability to move immigrant integration policies in a state with such complicated political dynamics like New York will not only provide lessons for us and our allies' state advocacy, but can serve as a model for other states with similar political landscapes. We cannot realize this change until we all contribute, by supporting organizations engaged in this advocacy, by uplifting the stories of immigrants, and by committing to making our communities ones where everyone can thrive.

ENDNOTES

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