



Common Sense Responses to Immigration

Background

Deporting every undocumented person in the United States would be economically devastating, impractical, and morally dubious. With comprehensive immigration reform stalled at the national level, North Carolina needs to step up with common sense public policies that strengthen our communities rather than divide them. In spite of many impediments to full economic integration, immigrants strengthen North Carolina in many ways, including:

- Operating roughly 20% of the state's Main Street Businesses
- Accounting for 80% of the net new Main Street Businesses opened between 2000 and 2013
- Helping communities that have significant immigrant populations to deliver better wages, lower unemployment, and lower levels of poverty than communities with few immigrants.
- Bringing jobs and businesses to struggling neighborhoods, thereby acting as the leading edge of economic revitalization in many communities
- Lessening or reversing population declines in many rural communities

Key Issues

Reject Bigotry: This is a year to take a stand for respectful and civil discourse. It is also a moment to stand up against rhetoric and policy proposals that are divisive and discriminatory. With some public figures stoking nationalist rage, candidates for elected office have the opportunity to reject that brand of politics. We need leaders who approach policy decisions pragmatically and talk about people in our communities with respect and compassion.

Driver's Licenses: Failure to ensure access to driver's licenses regardless of immigration status undermines public safety and forces immigrants into the economic shadows. From a public safety perspective, licensing ensures that drivers know the rules of the road and makes it easier for law enforcement officers to know with the people who they may come into contact with in the community. A license is also required for most basic daily life like shopping or setting up utilities, so denying licenses to immigrants prevents them from fully contributing to the state economy.

In-State Tuition: North Carolina should join the growing list of states that guarantee in-state university and community college tuition for qualified graduates regardless of their immigration status. There are far too many stories of diligent and talented young people who can't afford higher education in North Carolina because they were brought to this country as children and do not yet have permanent resident status or citizenship..

Community Solutions: State leaders should allow communities to develop effective ways of helping immigrants integrate socially and economically. Unfortunately, recent changes to state law (HB318) have tried to prevent local efforts to support immigrant integration and improve community safety for all residents. This trend must be reversed if North Carolina hopes to benefit from the many contributions of immigrants and pursue the greater growth possible through an inclusive economy.

Right to Live and Work in NC Without Fear: We already know that immigrants contribute significantly to our state's economy. Providing a work permit to immigrant family members with deep roots in our local communities would enhance their contributions even more. Our state should stop spending taxpayer dollars to oppose the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) executive action. Implementation of DAPA will strengthen our communities, protect the dignity of families, create jobs, raise average wages for U.S.-born workers, and grow North Carolina's economy by billions of dollars in the first decade. And lifting the fear of deportation from thousands of parents of U.S.-born children will improve mental health and economic stability for thousands of U.S. citizens and immigrants. Rather than trying to block immigration programs in court, North Carolina should instead be supporting common sense policies like DAPA that offer work authorization, promote practices that foster immigrant integration, and urge Congress to overhaul an outdated and broken immigration system so that it can offer pathways to citizenship for our North Carolina neighbors.

Questions for Candidates

- ***Will you denounce threatening and demeaning statements made about immigrant and refugee communities?***
- ***Do you support issuing driver's licenses regardless of immigration status?***
- ***Do you support in-state tuition to all qualified North Carolina high school graduates, regardless of immigration status?***
- ***Do you agree that the state should stop wasting its time and money opposing DACA and DAPA?***