



## Commonsense Immigration Policies That Strengthen Communities

**With comprehensive immigration reform stalled at the national level, North Carolina needs to step up with commonsense public policies that strengthen our communities rather than divide them.**

### Background

The White House is attacking legal immigrants through draconian changes to policies on visas, family immigration, and government benefits. Deporting every undocumented person in the United States is not only morally dubious, but is also impractical and would be economically ruinous. Even in spite of cruel barriers to full integration, immigrants strengthen North Carolina in a host of ways:

- In North Carolina, immigrants and refugees are our neighbors, classmates, co-workers, and family members.
- Immigrants and refugees operate roughly 20 percent of the state's Main Street Businesses
- They account for 80 percent 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 leading in the economic revitalization in many communities
- Lessening or reversing population declines in many rural parts of the state, thereby helping to breathe new economic and social life into many struggling communities
- Bringing sorely needed skills, talents, and hard work to North Carolina's labor market
- Enriching the cultural fabric of the state

### Current Context & Questions for Candidates

**The Trump Administration's ill-conceived, poorly enacted "zero tolerance" policy has created a humanitarian crisis at the Mexican border.** Some forcibly separated families have still not been reunified, and many children may never fully recover from being torn from their families at a tender age. Between 2,500 and 3,000 children were separated from their parents after the administration chose to prosecute every individual entering the country without inspection under a "zero tolerance" policy. This policy shocked the conscience of the nation because of the irreparable physical, emotional, and social harm it visited on children and families. Currently, 2,400 immigrant children are still detained in detention camps and an additional 10,000 remain in government custody. These numbers could grow as more detention beds are created for children.

- ***If elected, how would you ensure the reunification of families affected by this policy? How would you advocate for the immigrant community in the state, regardless of immigrant status?***

**The Trump Administration recently lowered the ceiling for yearly refugee resettlements into the U.S. to 30,000, even though numerous humanitarian crises around the globe have forced millions of people to seek refuge. The new limit is less than one-third of the 110,000 person cap that existed at the beginning of the Trump Administration. Moreover, the Trump Administration did not come anywhere near the 45,000 person**

cap for the current year, so it is entirely possible that this Administration will fail to even meet this new lower ceiling. Refugees make particularly meaningful economic contributions to the state's economy; in North Carolina, refugees contributed \$182 million in federal taxes and \$91 million in state and local taxes. Although refugees are investing in the place they call home, the current administration continues a battle against their presence in the country.

- ***If elected, what would you do to ensure the yearly cap on the number of refugees the United States will accept reflects our historical commitment to human rights?***

**North Carolina failed to join more than 20 other states that guarantee in-state university and community college tuition for qualified high school graduates, regardless of their immigration status.** Currently, undocumented students and DACA beneficiaries are charged out of state tuition, even if they have called North Carolina home for most of their lives and graduated in good standing from a North Carolina high school. This prevents many accomplished and talented students from pursuing their dreams and from making their full economic and social contributions to North Carolina. For the sake of both the state and its students, in-state tuition should be available to all who qualify, regardless of their immigration status.

- ***If elected, would you support in-state tuition to all qualified North Carolina high school graduates, regardless of immigration status?***

**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 drivers know the rules of the road and makes it easier for law enforcement officers to identify people in traffic-related interactions. A license is also required for necessary daily activities like shopping, taking children to school, getting to work, or setting up utilities, so denying licenses to immigrants prevents them from fully contributing to the state economy.

- ***If elected, would you support issuing driver's licenses to all North Carolina residents?***

**State leaders should allow communities to develop effective ways of helping immigrants integrate socially and economically.** Unfortunately, changes to state law in the past few years (e.g. HB318) have sought to prevent local governments and officials from working effectively with immigrant communities. 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.

- ***If elected, what are the top three immigration policy changes you believe will ensure a revitalized, competitive future for the state's economy?***

**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.

- ***Will you speak out about rising racism, xenophobia and islamophobia in our nation's public discourse and incidents between individuals? Will you denounce threatening and demeaning statements that target immigrant and refugee communities?***