

THE TRUTH ABOUT IMMIGRANTS IN MASSACHUSETTS

Immigrants are key to America's prosperity, diversity, and security

Immigrants are Massachusetts	2004	1990	1900
• Percent of MA residents who are immigrants	14%	9%	32%
• Percent of MA workforce who are immigrants	17%	11%	41%

Immigrants fuel our economy

- **By rescuing our workforce:** With baby boomers retiring and residents moving out of the state, MA would have lost 100,000 workers in the 1990s if not for immigration. Even with new immigrants, MA is experiencing the third lowest labor force growth in the nation. The Census Bureau projects that MA will remain completely dependent on immigrants for all of its population growth over the remainder of this decade.
- **By starting businesses:** In the Greater Boston area alone, immigrants own more than 8,000 small businesses. These businesses represent over \$5.5 billion in annual sales and employ nearly 37,000 people. They contribute approximately \$9.5 billion to the regional product, and \$304 million in State and Federal taxes. In June, 2006, more than 500 top economists and scholars, including 5 Nobel Laureates, agreed in an Open Letter to President Bush that immigrants do not displace American workers and that immigration has been a net gain for American citizens.
- **By paying taxes:** The typical immigrant and his or her descendants pay an estimated \$80,000 more in taxes than they will receive in benefits over their lifetimes. All immigrants pay sales, property, and income taxes. Undocumented immigrants pay state and federal taxes using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) issued by the Internal Revenue Service. Social Security funds contributed by undocumented immigrants amount to nearly \$6 billion annually.

Immigrants contribute to vibrant communities

- **By owning homes:** Nationally, 68% of naturalized citizens own homes, a rate similar to that of native-born residents (70%). In Boston, 30% of immigrants own homes, compared to 32% of all residents. In Lawrence, Latino home ownership rose by 166% over the 10-year period ending in 2000. In Lowell, immigrant home ownership is up by 82%, mostly among Southeast Asians.
- **By integrating into our communities:** In spite of significant waiting lists (over 20,000 statewide), immigrants are learning English, becoming citizens, and contributing to cultural, civic, and religious institutions. In Massachusetts, 46% of immigrants are naturalized US citizens. Of those Massachusetts residents who speak another language, 77% speak English well or very well.
- **By strengthening our democracy:** Nationwide, more than 7 million naturalized citizens voted in the 2004 elections, comprising about 6% of voters. With an additional 14.25 million potential voters among those currently eligible to naturalize and the 16 to 24 year-old U.S. born children of immigrants, immigrants and their descendants are poised to play an even larger role in our democracy by 2008.

Immigrants keep our nation safe

- **By enlisting in the armed services:** There are over 60,000 immigrants on active duty in the US armed forces, making up 5% of the total enlisted personnel on active duty. And, more than 20 percent of the recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor for military service have been immigrants.

Prepared by the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition

For more information, contact Ali Noorani at (617) 350-5480 x201 or anoorani@miracoalition.org

www.miracoalition.org

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Citizenship for New Americans is An Investment in the Massachusetts Workforce

In Massachusetts there are nearly 300,000 legal immigrants eligible for, or in the process of, naturalization to become U.S. citizens. Yet there is limited funding for civics classes, ESOL classes, and services for immigrants in the naturalization process, a journey that can take anywhere from 5 to 15 years.

In fact, in 2005 there were 18,501 on waiting lists to access ESOL classes across Massachusetts.

What is the Citizenship for New Americans?

- **English for New Americans**
Coordinating a statewide network that leverages public, private and individual funding of ESOL classes for recent immigrants provided by Mutual Assistance Associations, faith-based organizations, community based organizations and others.
- **Civics for New Americans**
Utilizing expertise of local universities and national leaders, programs integrated with ESOL services will be developed to prepare immigrants for the naturalization test and provide opportunities to civically engage in local communities
- **Citizenship for New Americans**
Offering such services as application review and assistance, transportation to and from Boston for the disabled, and interview accompaniment organizations will be able to increase the number of immigrants becoming U.S. Citizens in a safe, efficient and effective manner.

Why should Massachusetts help immigrants become Americans?

- **It's good for the workforce.**
Seventeen percent of our workforce is immigrant. Without new immigrant workers the state's labor force would have shrunk. When immigrants become citizens, they are more likely to stay in Massachusetts, earn a higher income, and draw more business and industry to the Commonwealth.
- **It's good for national security.**
As one advocate offers, "This is the last time we can formally pass on our cultural values to newcomers. Our responsibility is to tell folks what 'the rules' are so they know how to follow them."
- **It's good for our communities.**
More classes to help people become citizens means more civic participation and ultimately more voters who want to stay in Massachusetts. If immigrants stay here in Massachusetts, the state will be less likely to lose a Congressional seat due to population decline. The loss of a Congressional seat would mean less federal funding for housing, transportation and other programs.
- **It's good for families.**
Investing in immigrant families is a sign to immigrants across the country that Massachusetts cares about our newest neighbors and welcomes their participation and contribution.
- **It's good for the economy.**
When immigrants become citizens, they are able to access federally funded benefits, the state receives federal reimbursement for many services, and Massachusetts based contractors have a larger citizen workforce to increase their competitiveness for federal contracts.

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For more information, contact Carly Burton at (617) 350-5480 x208 or cburton@miracoalition.org

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English for Speakers of Other Language is an Investment in Massachusetts' Future

Businesses, communities and families benefit from assuring access to ESOL.

Workers' ability to communicate effectively in English leads to:

- Improved customer services
- Improved patient care
- Increased capacity to implement new production modes
- Increased family income leading to stronger families and stronger future generations.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) services are the primary education resource for immigrants in need of English and high school level skills.

- ABE includes English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), General Educational Development programs (GED) and adult basic education (non-reader to pre-GED), with targeted services in Workforce Development, Family Literacy and Transition to Higher Education.
- ABE services include classroom instruction, one-to-one tutoring, computer-assisted instruction and distance learning.
- A diverse provider network, composed of community-based organizations, local education agencies, community colleges, and correctional institutions, delivers ABE services.
- ABE programs provide adults with the skills required to find better jobs, support their families, contribute to their communities, and assist their children in school.

The demand for ESOL /ABE services is far greater than the services available.

- Approximately 25,000 individuals annually utilize the ABE programs funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education to learn English, earn a GED, or gain job skills.
- Nearly the same amount, 24,442 (non-duplicated count), are currently on waiting lists for these programs because there aren't adequate resources to fund needed programs in the state.
- Less than 1 out of 2 adults (49%) who try to enroll in ABE services each year can actually enroll because there aren't adequate resources to fund needed programs in the state. (Mass. Department of Education, 2003)
- Waiting lists vary from 2 to 8 months for ABE and 6 months to 2 years for ESOL

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For more information, contact Claudia Green at (617) 350-5480 x203 or cgreen@miracoalition.org

www.miracoalition.org

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Ensure Public Safety by Keeping Immigration Enforcement Federal

Law enforcement officials and domestic violence prevention advocates agree that requiring local or state police to enforce federal immigration laws makes our communities less safe, undermines community-policing efforts, diverts scarce law enforcement resources, and violates the rights of people who will be subject to illegal racial and ethnic profiling.

Jane Doe Inc., the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence says (June 2006, www.janedoe.org):

"Law enforcement plays a crucial role in protecting victims of domestic and sexual violence. If local or state police become immigration law enforcers, many immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and their children will be forced to choose between remaining in abusive and violent relationships or risking deportation for reporting these abuses."

Major Cities Police Chiefs Association, representing 47 largest police departments in the U.S. states (June 7, 2006):

- Local police enforcement of immigration laws undermines the trust and cooperation with immigrant communities that are essential elements of community oriented policing.
- Local agencies do not possess adequate resources to enforce these laws in addition to the added responsibility of homeland security.
- Immigration laws are very complex and the training required to understand them would significantly detract from the core mission of the local police to create safe communities.
- Local police do not possess clear authority to enforce the civil aspects of these laws. If given the authority the federal government does not have the capacity to handle the volume of immigration violations that currently exist.
- The lack of clear authority increases the risk of civil liability for local police and government.

Congress has already rejected the suggestion of having local police acting as immigration agents by defeating the federal Clear Act. The Senate and the President recognize that solving our immigration issue requires much bigger thinking than an enforcement only approach.

Links and Resources:

- State and Local law enforcement oppose local enforcement of immigration laws: <http://www.immigrationforum.org/documents/TheDebate/EnforcementLocalPolice/OppositiontoSEnforcement.pdf>
- Police Chiefs across the US speak out against local enforcement of immigration laws: <http://www.bordc.org/resources/police.pdf>

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For more information, contact Marcony Almeida at (617) 350-5480 x206 or malmeida @miracoalition.org

www.miracoalition.org

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Protect Jobs and Workers in Massachusetts by Keeping Immigration Enforcement Federal

Mandating a reporting and enforcement relationship between the Attorney General and federal immigration authorities leads to the exploitation of immigrant labor, and hurts native workers along the way.

Treat Workers Fairly and Protect Jobs

- Local enforcement would deter all immigrant workers (including the majority who have legal work authorization) from filing wage violation complaints against abusive employers.
- As a result, the Attorney General would be unable to prosecute the most abusive violators of wage and hour laws and all workers would suffer.
- By undermining the Attorney General's wage enforcement efforts, unscrupulous employers would be able to evade the wage laws, unfairly competing with other employers and hurting all workers by driving down wages.

Don't Waste Scarce State Resources

If state officials were charged with enforcement of immigration law, they would have to undertake extensive efforts to review complicated federal laws and adopt parallel state enforcement provisions that may not survive legal challenge. Other provisions would require state employees to exercise expertise on the intricacies of immigration law in order to discern who has legal work authorization while relying on verification systems that are fraught with inaccuracies and problems.

Welcome Immigrant Workers for the Success of Massachusetts

1 in 7 Massachusetts residents was born in another country, and 17% of our state's workforce is foreign-born. Mandating the state to enforce federal immigration laws sends the wrong message to the immigrant community that Massachusetts does not welcome the contributions of immigrants and their families to the Commonwealth. As a result, fewer immigrant families will see Massachusetts as a welcoming state for them and their families, thus further exacerbating the population decline in our State.

Protect and Nurture the Massachusetts Economy

- Many employers in Massachusetts and those considering moving to Massachusetts will see new rules as a significant obstacle to doing business in this state.
- Verifying employees with an electronic system that is already fraught with inaccuracies, delays, and other obstacles to hiring will be a significant burden to employers seeking state contracts ranging from school construction to elder care.
- In addition, the potential liability for inadvertent mistakes or the possibility of being targeted for investigation based on anonymous and unsubstantiated complaints would only further discourage employers from doing business in the state.

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All Massachusetts Residents Need Access to Health Care

- **Prohibiting people from being eligible for uncompensated care will hurt hospitals and community health centers.** Community health centers and safety net hospitals have a commitment to serve anyone that comes to their doors. If the reimbursements for the services they provide are limited, it will damage their ability to provide to the whole public.
- **Denying people access to care will hinder the public's health.** Further hindering people's access to care will prevent those who urgently need medical care from seeking needed health services, including testing and treatment for communicable diseases like tuberculosis. Untreated diseases and unchecked conditions undermine the health of all of our communities.
- **The cost of emergency services would increase.** People who avoid seeking necessary health services until their conditions had progressed become more expensive to treat thus making the cost of emergency services rise.
- **Providing Access for Immigrants Will Reduce Health Disparities.** Immigrants already have many barriers, including limited English proficiency and confusion about the health care system, that hinder their access and contribute to health disparities. Restoration MassHealth to this population will level the playing field for these new immigrants and reduce disparities.
- **Covering adult immigrants improves the health of their children, many of whom are citizens.** Eighty-five percent of immigrant families include at least one citizen usually a child. According to the Urban Institute, children in immigrant headed households are twice as likely to be in fair or poor health as their counterparts in citizen headed families.¹ These results may be explained by factors other than income, including non-citizens more limited access to Medicaid and other forms of health insurance.
- **Denying access to uninsured undocumented immigrants will not save the state that much money.** According to a recent study by Dr. Sarita Mohanty, immigrants without insurance accrue lower medical bills than native-born patients. Likewise in a study done by the Hospital Association of Southern California, undocumented immigrants are less than a quarter of the expenses related to unreimbursed hospital care, only about 20%.

¹ The Health and Well-Being of Children in Immigrant Families: from the Urban Institute, November, 2002

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All Massachusetts Residents Need Access to Housing

Why is Restricting Immigrant Access to Housing a Problem?

- **Citizen and legal immigrant children will be harmed and made homeless.** Many immigrant families consist of members with various immigration statuses. If immigration status is used to determine eligibility for public housing, many US citizen children will be deemed ineligible for housing and rendered homeless.

- **Victims of domestic violence will be forced to remain with their abusers.**

Example: A woman without documented status is hiding from her US citizen ex-husband who has beaten her severely and threatened her children. They have been in a shelter for domestic violence victims but their time is running out. The mother wants to move away from her abuser. If immigration restrictions are instituted, she and her children will not be allowed state-funded housing and be placed at risk of continued attack. The children may have to be placed in foster care because of her inaccessibility to a safe home.

Laws must take real-life situations into consideration, and protect the most vulnerable members of our society.

- **Elderly and disabled legal immigrants could be forced to go without the live-in assistance given by their family members.**

Example: A 75-year old woman from El Salvador was granted asylum status several years ago, has worked and paid taxes since that time, and now is suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. She is mostly confined to a wheelchair, can no longer work and receives social security. Her taxpaying daughter takes care of her, while working full time at just above minimum wage. But because of a quirk in immigration law that made the daughter too old to get the same status as her mother. This mother and her daughter could effectively be barred from moving into elderly/disabled wheelchair accessible state housing.

- **Ease the suffering.** Most homeless people are working and contributing to our country. Forty-eight percent of poor families have at least one working adult in the household. They are paying taxes and would like to become full participants in our society. They hope to create a better future for their kids. To deny them and their children shelter is to let people suffer needlessly.
- **Veterans are not being treated unfairly in state-funded housing.** Immigrants are not given priority over citizens or veterans. Veteran preference is not threatened or displaced by immigrants as currently administered.

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For more information, contact Carly Burton at (617) 350-5480 x208 or cburton@miracoalition.org

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Same State, Same Rate for All Massachusetts High School Students

Many immigrant students have grown up in Massachusetts, excelled in our schools and are graduating with honors. These students are contributing positively to the state. Even though they have lived in the state for most of their lives, these students, with and without immigration status, are being prohibited from paying college tuition at Massachusetts resident rates. The In-State Tuition Bill is a solution to this barrier to higher education.

The In-State Tuition bill benefits everyone in Massachusetts:

- **Same rate as their high school classmates.**
Students who attend at least three years and graduate from a Massachusetts high school would be eligible to pay equal resident tuition rates at Massachusetts public colleges.
- **Generates \$2.5 Million in new revenues for Massachusetts.**
Massachusetts public colleges will receive new tuition payments from students who are currently denied access to college. According to the MA Taxpayers Foundation, the state would receive \$2.5 Million in new revenues. In the long term, Massachusetts will derive positive benefits from increased tax revenues and a greater number of educated workers.
- **Students will pay tuition, not receive financial aid, scholarships or loans.**
The legislation would only provide students the same equal opportunity to pay tuition at in-state rates as any other resident of the Commonwealth.
- **Students seeking citizenship.**
Students must prove that they have filed an application to become a legal permanent resident, or will file an application as soon as they are eligible to do so.

Experts agree:

Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, State and Community College Presidents all support allowing immigrant students to go to college at the same rates as their high school classmates.

Ten states have passed similar bills:

Nebraska, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, California, New York, Illinois, Washington, Kansas and Oklahoma (many signed by Republican Governors).

Students and their families pay taxes:

Immigrant students and their families have been paying into the system. They work, pay taxes, and are an important part of our state's economy. They pay local, state and federal taxes with an individual tax identification number (ITIN number) issued by the IRS.

Citizen Students Unaffected

The universities and colleges themselves state that citizen students will not be displaced. Furthermore, citizens from other states can establish residency in Massachusetts for tuition purposes after 6 months, for Community Colleges, and 1 year for State Colleges and the UMASS system. The bar is higher for immigrant students, as they have to attend a Massachusetts high school for 3 years.

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For more information, contact Michele Rudy at (617) 350-5480 x206 or mrudy@miracoalition.org

www.miracoalition.org

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