

This fact sheet provides empirical data about immigrants' economic contributions in relation to the proposal for an Immigration Legal Services Fund in Fort Collins.

### **IMMIGRANTS PAY TAXES<sup>1</sup>**

- Immigrants in our district (Congressional District 2) pay more than \$578.8 million in local, state and federal taxes a year.<sup>2</sup>
- Immigrant-led households in Colorado paid \$5 billion in federal, state and local taxes in 2018.
- Undocumented immigrants in Colorado paid an estimated \$429.3 million in state and local taxes in 2018.
- Colorado DACA recipients and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$31.5 million in state and local taxes in 2018.<sup>3</sup>
- In the US, undocumented immigrants pay an average of \$11.64 billion in state and local taxes a year
- On average, undocumented individuals pay 8% of their income in state and local taxes. To put this in perspective, the top 1 percent of taxpayers nationwide pay an average effective tax rate of just 5.4%.
- All immigrants, regardless of status, contribute approximately \$80,000 more in taxes than the amount they use in government services over their lifetime.

### **IMMIGRANTS FILL A GROWING GAP IN THE LABOR MARKET**

Our economy needs immigrant workers. An overwhelming number of economic research studies have categorically disproven the notion that immigrants take jobs that would otherwise be filled by Americans.

- Native-born workers and immigrant workers tend to possess different skills that often complement one another.
- Documented and undocumented immigrant workers fill labor gaps by taking on low-skilled jobs native-born citizens are unwilling to take.
- Undocumented immigrants had little to no effect on the wages and employment of native-born workers.<sup>4</sup>
- Immigrants and their native-born children are expected to be the only growth in the labor market within the next two decades, accounting for a net 18.2M workers.<sup>5</sup>
- By filling low-skill labor gaps, immigrants have facilitated the growth of sectors such as retail, agriculture, landscaping, restaurants, and hotels.
- Immigrant-powered expansion attracts investment, and this creates middle-class jobs for U.S. citizens in management, engineering, finance and marketing.<sup>6</sup>
- Farmers report that their number one limiting factor is labor shortage.
- 78% of all farmworkers are foreign-born and 70% of farm laborers are undocumented.
- Each year, undocumented farmworkers contribute \$9 billion to fruit and vegetable markets in Colorado.<sup>7</sup>

Additional facts about immigrants and our Colorado economy:<sup>8</sup>

- Immigrants account for 10% of the population, but 12.5% of the workforce.
- Immigrants are 25.5% more likely to work than native-born Coloradans: 49.1% of the native-born population is employed in Colorado compared to 61.6% of immigrants.
- 16.2% of personal care aids, 15.7% of physicians and surgeons, 12.6% of nursing assistants and 9.6% of health care workers in Colorado are immigrants.

### **IMMIGRANTS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF COLORADO'S ECONOMIC ENGINE**

- Colorado is home to 557,944 immigrants who contribute over \$5 billion in taxes annually with \$14.2 billion in spending power.<sup>9</sup>
- 1 in 8 workers in Colorado is an immigrant.<sup>10</sup>
- Across the state, 32,115 immigrants are self-employed and 84,000 people are employed at immigrant owned businesses.
- 42,844 immigrant business owners accounted for 12 percent of all self-employed Colorado residents in 2018 and generated \$1 billion in business income.<sup>11</sup>
- Roughly 1 in 3 Colorado Fortune 500 companies were founded by an immigrant or their child. Those firms have an annual revenue of \$20.8B.
- Undocumented immigrants are stably employed, and in Colorado, 70% of the undocumented immigrant population has lived here for more than 10 years.<sup>12</sup>
- Undocumented workers are entrepreneurs, consumers and taxpayers. The economy would actually lose jobs without them.
- Immigrant communities contribute to demographic revitalization, cultural enrichment, and innovation.<sup>13</sup>

For more information on immigrants' role in boosting our economy and improving job prospects for native-born citizens, please visit the following articles.

- [Immigrants Aren't Taking Americans' Jobs](#)
- [Immigration Helps American Workers' Wages and Job Opportunities](#)

### **IMMIGRANTS HELP SUSTAIN SOCIAL SECURITY**

Every year, undocumented workers pay billions in taxes for retirement benefits they will likely never receive. In 2010, undocumented individuals paid \$13 billion into retirement accounts. Historically, immigrants have contributed more than \$300 billion to the Social Security Trust Fund.<sup>14</sup> Without the immigrant contribution, it is estimated that full benefits would not be paid out past 2037.<sup>15</sup>

### **IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES INCREASE ECONOMIC STABILITY**

An immigration legal services fund is an investment in our immigrant community's civil rights. It is also an investment in our whole community's

economic health. The following data shows how providing support with affirmative cases can improve families' economic standing.

- Survey data shows that when dreamers were allowed to have a work permit through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, 58% of DACA recipients reported obtaining a job with better pay and 53% reported obtaining a job that better fit their education and training.
- Hourly earnings of DACA recipients increased 86% (from \$10.46 to \$19.45), on average.
- 60% of DACA recipients reported purchasing their first car, and 14% reported purchasing their first home.
- 71% of recipients reported they pursued educational opportunities they previously could not.<sup>16</sup>
- The vast majority of DACA recipients, approximately 91 percent, are currently employed. They pay an estimated \$1.6 billion in state and local taxes.
- If the DACA program was eliminated the United States would lose at least \$433.4 billion from the GDP over the course of a decade.<sup>17</sup>
- Furthermore, if undocumented immigrants in the U.S. obtain legal status, their earnings would increase by 15% within 5 years and if they had a pathway to citizenship, their estimated earnings would increase by 25% within 5 years.<sup>18</sup>

### **IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICE FUNDS ARE AN ANTI-RACISM TOOL**

The last four years brought a racial awakening for people of conscience that has led to a desire for change, decency and compassion in our laws, systems and institutions. Right now, our country is having a long overdue conversation about race.

- Immigration has always been part of the racial landscape of America. The very first law regarding Naturalization, dating all the way back to 1790, reserved citizenship by naturalization to “free white persons.”<sup>19</sup>
- To this day, immigration policies (such as the Muslim Travel Ban, ending Temporary Protective Status, ending the Central American Minors Program, the separation of families, caging of children, and redistributing of funding to keep out asylum seekers at the border) disproportionately affect immigrants of color.<sup>20</sup>
- Addressing the lack of universal representation in immigration court is also critical to addressing anti-Blackness in immigration court and fighting back against the detention-to-deportation pipeline.
- “The compounding forces of systemic racism, over-policing in Black communities, and entanglement between law enforcement and ICE have created an immigration system that detains, deports, and harms Black immigrants over four times as frequently as non-Black immigrants.”<sup>21</sup>

For more information on racism in the immigration system, we invite you to visit the following article, [American Immigration Laws Have Always Been About Preserving Whiteness](#).

### **IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICE FUNDS ADDRESS HEALTH INEQUITIES**

- Health equity for immigrants and communities of color can only be realized by effectively ushering in a new era of immigrant integration.<sup>22, 23</sup> The highly damaging restrictive immigration climate has translated into an immediate need for legal services to navigate the U.S.'s complex and inaccessible immigration system.
- The restrictive immigration policy climate in which we live today produces and exacerbates existing racial economic and health inequities.<sup>24</sup>
- The phenomenon of mixed status families means that not just undocumented immigrants, but whole family units including U.S.-born citizens are negatively impacted by restrictive and punitive immigration policies that spur inequity.<sup>25</sup>
- Children of undocumented parents experience greater mental health issues and lasting negative effects on adult educational attainment and income.
- In Colorado, Blacks and Latinxs receive far less treatment for mental health than do whites.<sup>26</sup>
- Undocumented immigrants do not qualify for welfare, food stamps, Medicaid, and most other public benefits. Most of these programs require proof of legal immigration status and under the 1996 welfare law, even legal immigrants cannot receive these benefits until they have been in the United States for more than five years. This has a spillover effect on families and communities since impacted immigrants often spend their savings on routine or emergency care.
- Noncitizens who do not qualify for federal programs such as Medicaid are especially at risk from the COVID pandemic. Data shows that in Colorado, Black and Latinx Coloradans are hospitalized for COVID at higher rates.
- In August of 2020, 38% of patients hospitalized for COVID were Latinx even though Latinxs represent only 22% of the total population.<sup>27</sup>
- Across the United States, Latinx individuals are 3 times less likely to have health insurance than whites.<sup>28</sup>
- There is a negative impact on community safety and cohesion that is a direct result of the increased fear of police felt by many immigrant families. This contributes to social isolation and a mistrust of government institutions, including law enforcement.<sup>29</sup>

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## Endnotes

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