Yes to Immigrants State Agenda

COVID-19 does not discriminate. And yet, immigrants and communities of color have been disproportionately affected, losing lives and jobs to this pandemic. An April report in the Annals of Epidemiology found immigrants in California ages 20-54 were 11 times more likely to die from COVID-19 compared to native-born Latinos and white residents.

Moreover, 34 percent of undocumented workers work in an industry directly affected by COVID-19, and they have lost wages. Despite these significant impacts to immigrant communities, large-scale relief efforts so far left immigrant communities out. The four COVID-19 relief packages approved by Congress in 2020 excluded undocumented workers and mixed-status families. The American Rescue Plan included mixed-status families but excluded undocumented immigrants.

CHIRLA’s Yes to Immigrants State Agenda seeks to uplift the contributions of immigrants and recognizes their essential role and their humanity. CHIRLA believes that for immigrant communities to recover, the state must invest in relief that includes them. For more information, contact Rita Medina, state policy and advocacy manager, at Rmedina@chirla.org.

State Investments

The state’s projected revenues are likely to be stronger than expected because of the enactment of the American Rescue Plan that provides $195 billion in aid to states. California expects to get $26.3 billion and projects a $26 billion windfall from income and sales tax collections.

As a result, the Legislature and the governor have a unique opportunity to ensure that all Californians, regardless of immigration status, can access relief programs and benefits. CHIRLA urges them to investment in the following programs in the 2021-2022 state budget:
- **Food Security**: $200 million for a fund to provide food aid for undocumented immigrants affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **ONE California Program**: In partnership with the ONE California coalition, CHIRLA urges investment in qualified and culturally competent legal services for immigrants in our state. CHIRLA supports the current budget allocation for immigration services and requests a one-time allocation of $30 million to ensure the state is ready for potential relief for undocumented immigrants, and to support ongoing efforts to help immigrant families enroll in expanded state benefits.

- **Access to Healthcare**: As part of the Health4All Coalition, CHIRLA urges removal of the eligibility barrier of legal status to qualify for full-scope MediCal, allowing more than 1 million low-income undocumented adults access to healthcare.

- **Higher Education**: CHIRLA urges investments to ensure that institutions of higher learning provide services tailored to immigrant students. These programs are especially important given COVID’s impact on California’s students. These investments include:
  - Additional $3 million for community colleges to implement Dream resource liaison programs
  - $10 million for the Dream Loan Program to help immigrant students complete their undergraduate and graduate education

- **Asylees**: $8 million for the Enhanced Services for Asylees program, to help resettle persons granted asylum.
State Legislation

*Economic Justice*

**AB 4 (Arámbula) Health for All:** Expands access to healthcare to all regardless of immigration status.

**AB 221 (Santiago) Food Security for All:** Provides food vouchers/cards for those financially affected by COVID-19.

**SB 56 (Durazo) Health for All Seniors:** Expands access to healthcare to all seniors, 65 years and older, regardless of immigration status.

*Access to Justice*

**AB 256 (Kalra) Racial Justice Act:** Prohibits the state from seeking or obtaining a criminal conviction, or from imposing a sentence, based upon race, ethnicity, or national origin.

**AB 600 (Arámbula) Hate Crimes:** Clarifies that in the protected classes, citizenship status, is connected to nationality.

**SB 334 (Durazo) Private Detention Accountability Act:** Holds immigration detention centers accountable and ensures they follow their own guidelines. If they fail to meet them, the insurance commissioner will deny them state insurance unless they take corrective action within 60 days.

**SB 483 (Allen):** Modestly reduces prison and jail populations, and improves the fairness of the criminal legal system by retroactively applying three-year and one-year sentence enhancement eliminations enacted by the Legislature in 2017 and 2019. This follows recommendations from the Committee on Revision of the Penal Code, numerous experts, reform advocates, and the families of imprisoned people.
Full Integration of Immigrants

AB 1368 (Calderon) Enhanced Services Program for Asylees: Establishes the Enhanced Services Program for Asylees (ESPA) within the California Department of Social Services. ESPA will offer case management for people granted asylum, ensuring they receive culturally competent and responsive case management for up to 90 days.


SB 321 (Durazo) Health and Safety for All Workers Act: Repeals the exception for household domestic service workers in the California Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1973, so they can finally be protected.

SB 452 (Gonzalez) Agency of Immigrant Affairs: Establishes an agency and secretary post for immigrant affairs.

SB 583 (Newman) Secure Voter Verification and Enrollment Act: Streamlines and secures California’s voter registration system. Under this bill, the DMV and other agencies rely on previously established data collection to more effectively verify voter registration eligibility. An unregistered eligible adult verified as a citizen during an agency transaction is automatically added to voter registration rolls, while existing registrants will automatically have their address or name updated based on information provided during an agency transaction. By relying on information that is already being presented, verified, and recorded in the normal course of agency transactions, California can create more accurate and complete voter rolls, reduce human error, and maximize safeguards for non-citizens interacting with these agencies.