

# EXPAND PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO LEGAL IMMIGRANTS

## OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE THE BUSINESS CLIMATE

Expand Kentucky's workforce to help meet existing employer needs by removing barriers to obtain professional licenses for certain populations, such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients and immigrants otherwise authorized to work in the United States.

## APPROACH TO TACKLE THE ISSUE

Allow DACA recipients and other legal immigrants who are authorized to work in the United States to pursue professional and occupational licenses in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Today, federal law 8 U.S.C. 1621 forbids states from granting any professional license to legal immigrant residents. However, a state may allow these residents the opportunity to pursue professional licenses by passing a state law to provide for such eligibility.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER TO MY BUSINESS

Worker shortages in areas such as teaching and nursing, which require a state-provided professional license, are causing increased stress on the current workforce and wage inflation. Expanding the eligible workforce in these professions will help alleviate the pressure in the labor market and help employers find qualified workers.

Although Kentucky has a small immigrant community, it is growing. Today, **4%** of the state's population was born in another country, and foreign-born residents make up a vital, educated share of the labor force, with a third of immigrants in Kentucky possessing a college degree or higher. Additionally, immigrants are an integral part of Kentucky's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

## WHAT WE ARE ASKING AN ELECTED OFFICIAL TO DO

Enact legislation allowing legal immigrants to work in the United States under federal law, such as DACA recipients, eligible to pursue professional licenses in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.



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