



HOW IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES STRENGTHEN PA

Pennsylvania has been built on immigrant contributions. From the early arrival of Pennsylvania “Dutch” to Italians, Irish, African, and Chinese, to more recent waves of Latin American, South and Southeast Asian, Eastern European, Korean, Arab, and new African immigrants, most Pennsylvanian families were once immigrants, and newcomers continue to build the strength and prosperity of our state.

New job growth, new businesses and purchasing power: Immigrants are a critical component of Pennsylvania’s labor force and business community. Immigrants comprised 7.1% of the state workforce in 2011.¹ Latinos and Asians wield \$26.4 billion in consumer purchasing power, own businesses with sales and receipts of \$14.8 billion and employ more than 73,000 people.² In 2010, Pennsylvania immigrants were more than 50 percent more likely to own a business than the overall state average.³

Filling the gap created by an aging workforce and urban population loss: Without immigrants, Pennsylvania’s population would have declined between 2000 and 2013.⁴ Pennsylvania ranks fourth among all states in the percentage of people 65 and older and immigration is necessary to help fill the labor force gap created by baby boomers’ retirement.⁵ Immigration to cities like Philadelphia has played a key role in turning around population decline.

Free and Welcoming Society: Pennsylvania has attracted diverse groups of people from many nations and walks of life, seeking liberty and a better life. Our communities are strongest when everyone who lives in them feels welcome. In the spirit of inclusion in which our country was founded, we should continue to welcome newcomers and oppose measures that isolate or scapegoat immigrants.

Paying taxes: Immigrants pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits. Undocumented immigrants paid \$135 million in Pennsylvania state and local taxes in 2010⁶ and undocumented immigrants contribute approximately \$8.5 billion in Social Security and Medicare funds each year⁷. Many states have found that immigrants have a positive net fiscal impact on their state budgets.⁸

Immigrants feed Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania’s \$6.7 billion agriculture and food production industry is key to the state remaining competitive in the global economy. Leaders in Pennsylvania’s agribusiness sector have testified to the need for immigrant labor to supplement waning domestic interest in farming jobs and sustained expansion of this sector.⁹

Immigrants seek integration and civic participation: Immigrants continue to work hard to integrate and participate fully in the civic life of their new country. 52% of Pennsylvania immigrants are naturalized citizens.¹⁰ PICC has registered more than 30,000 new citizens to vote since 2008. Demand for English and citizenship classes grow each year with a shortage of available programs and long waiting lists.

¹ Immigration Policy Center, “New Americans in Pennsylvania”, May 2013.

² Humphreys, J.M., *The Multicultural Economy 2010*, Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2010.

³ Fiscal Policy Institute, “Immigrant Small Business Owners”, June 2012.

⁴ Bipartisan Policy Center, “Immigration in Pennsylvania”, January 30, 2014.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *The Older Population: 2010*, November 2011.

⁶ Immigration Policy Center, “Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too”, April 2011.

⁷ Eduardo Porter, “Illegal Immigrants Are Bolstering Social Security With Billions”, *New York Times*, April 5, 2005.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Howells, M., “Senate Agriculture & Rural Affairs.” *PLS Committee News*, Pennsylvania Legislative Services, Oct. 23 2007; Carl Weiss, “Immigration Reform Will Help Pennsylvania Agriculture”, *PennLive Op-Ed*, October 23, 2013; Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, 2014 Agricultural Labor Reform, January 2014

¹⁰ Immigration Policy Center, “New Americans in Pennsylvania”, May 2013.