

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
NYS Senate Majority Leader and President Pro Tempore
LOB Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker, NYS Assembly
LOB Room 932
Albany, New York 12248

March 8, 2022

Dear Governor Hochul, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Heastie, and all Members of the New York State Legislature:

New York is home to more than [4.3 million immigrants](#) who are hardworking and eager to contribute to our state's economy and workforce. Unfortunately, many are ineligible to fill critical workforce roles in our state despite the desire and knowledge to do so. As we continue to battle with financial losses and workforce shortages brought on by COVID-19, we need to use all the tools and creative avenues available to us to ensure we can recover from this health and economic crisis, including providing access to licensure to all New Yorkers.

Now more than ever, our leaders should reduce barriers for immigrants to obtain professional licensing or necessary permits for all New Yorkers, regardless of an applicant's citizenship or immigration status. **We urge you to move quickly to pass the [Empire State Licensing Act \(S.03046/A.01952\)](#), sponsored by State Senator Gustavo Rivera and Assemblymember Catalina Cruz**, to remove arbitrary restrictions that hinder New York immigrants' ability to obtain professional licensing, harming the immigrant community and preventing much-needed growth for New York's economy and workforce.

While some New York immigrants can obtain professional licensing for certain professions such as nursing and education due to their temporary legal status, programs that provide work authorization and deportation protections like this, such as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) programs, remain temporary and limited. With over [43,500 DACA recipients](#) and [11,600 TPS holders](#) working in the health care and social assistance industries nationwide, if these types of programs were to end, those immigrants may lose their licenses or not be able to renew due to inadequate state laws. As Congress works at the federal level to fix policies that restrict immigrants from participating fully in the nation's workforce and economy, New York leaders have the power to override this unfair burden on the immigrant community.

The [Empire State Licensing Act](#) would help address these issues by providing all New Yorkers with access to professional, occupational, commercial, or business licenses, permits, certificates, or related registrations regardless of an applicant's language or immigration status. This legislation would remove English-language barriers, opening economic doors for immigrants that speak other languages; allow for the use of an individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN) whenever a social security number would be otherwise required; and enact data privacy safeguards for license applications, protecting the applicant information.

We rely on immigrants to keep us at the edge of innovation and competitiveness. In fact, nearly [one in four workers](#) in the state of New York is an immigrant. And undocumented New Yorkers are already contributing to key essential industries,

including more than [48,000](#) in health care, [109,000](#) in the food supply chain, [86,000](#) in construction, and [33,000](#) in the care economy. [They contribute billions in annual taxes](#), fill jobs skill gaps, and in many cases, spur investment and job creation that helps to revitalize communities. However, their employment options are capped at a time when we need all hands on deck to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, continue growing New York's economy, and bolster our workforce. This bill would allow New York to access untapped talents and skills within the immigrant community and increase the state's competitive advantage by attracting more qualified professionals to the workforce. This is of increased importance as [New York again led the nation in population decline](#) and [our population ages](#).

Passing the Empire State Licensing Act would unlock the doors to professional licensing for the immigrant community, allow thousands of New Yorkers to better provide for their families, and support the immigrant workforce in better serving the needs of our state, economy, and workforce. At the end of the day, our state's immigrant community has a desire to serve and we shouldn't restrict them from doing just that.

Sincerely,

Adhikaar

African Communities Together

Alianza Agrícola

ALIGN: The Alliance for a Greater New York

American Immigration Council

Asian American Federation

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund

Cabrini Immigrant Services of NYC, Inc.

Chinese Progressive Association

Chinese-American Planning Council

Citizen Action of New York

Columbia County Sanctuary Movement

Diligently Serving Immigrants International, Inc.

Faith in New York

For The Many

FWD.us

Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees

Hispanic Federation

Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative

Immigrant Defense Project

ImmSchools

Justice for Migrant Families

La Colmena

Labor-Religion Coalition of New York State

LaGuardia Community College

LatinoJustice PRLDEF

Make the Road New York

National Employment Law Project

Neighbors Link

New Immigrant Community Empowerment

New York Civil Liberties Union

New York Immigration Coalition

Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation

Partnership for the Public Good

Pre-Health Dreamers

Saratoga Immigration Coalition

SEPA Mujer Inc.

Teach For America

The Black Institute

The Bronx Defenders

The Legal Aid Society

UnLocal, Inc.

Worker Justice Center

Workers Center of Central New York

World Education Services, Inc.