



Florida Immigrant Coalition

"People working together for fair treatment of Florida's immigrants"

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Florida's Immigrant Agenda

For decades Florida has been a beacon of hope for many. Our state benefits from the entrepreneurship, labor and creativity of more than 3.2 million immigrants from around the world who call the Sunshine State home. We work in Florida's most vital industries, excel in classrooms, and participate vigorously as consumers and taxpayers.

Our state has a long history of seeing immigration and immigrants as an opportunity--not a threat--evidenced by our own state seal. Sadly, in recent times, we have seen a growing climate of racism and misinformation that criminalizes our immigrant families, making them live in fear and isolation. Whole communities grapple with misguided and costly enforcement and anti-immigrant sentiment that affects all of Florida, from our local sheriffs' offices to our state legislature.

No matter what boat we came on, whether the Mayflower, a slave ship or a balsa, we are all in the same boat now. Together we can create economies that work for all of our families. To restore Florida's welcoming spirit, and to ensure that our laws strengthen the cohesive fabric of our communities, we ask that our elected officials take these priorities seriously.

- **Just and Humane Immigration Reform with Family Reunification and a Path to Citizenship**
 - Because the immigration system is broken, many who have been in the U.S. for years are forced to live in the shadows of society. Any reform of immigration laws must give individuals a chance to belong and contribute fully to America, whether through a family member, employer, etc.—and we need Florida's elected officials to help us advance this common-sense goal.
 - If we truly believe in upholding "family values," our immigration system needs to be overhauled. Immigrant families face inhumane delays in being reunited with their relatives because of backlogs. This process must be streamlined, accelerated and humanized.

- **Stop Dividing Families and Communities Through Detentions and Deportations**
 - ICE, the immigration courts, and local officials working with ICE must take into account the best interests of our communities and families before detaining and deporting individuals.
 - ICE must have enforceable standards. The agency cannot target individuals based on race or mistreat detainees with impunity.
 - Local police cannot prioritize ICE over its own constituents and should not be corrupted to enforce immigration laws.

- **Secure Access to Education for Immigrant Students and Youth**
 - Immigrant youth have come to the U.S. by no choice of their own. Many complete high school, excel academically and are accepted into colleges. More importantly, they become a major part of civic life.
 - Legislation like the D.R.E.A.M. Act would enable these students to truly make America their home. In-state tuition would allow them equal access to education.
 - Higher education must be accessible to all, including immigrant youth.

- **Promote Safe and Just Workplaces for a Safe and Just Economy**
 - We need to enforce a zero tolerance policy that punishes employers who steal or withhold wages from all workers, including immigrants, who are the most vulnerable. When immigrant workers are exploited--paid sub-minimum wages or are unpaid--it hurts all workers and prevents all from earning a living wage.
 - During an economic crisis, our economy should focus on creating jobs to the benefit of all of us. Additionally, local governments should secure and enforce workers' rights now and in the future.
 - The resources spent detaining and deporting immigrants should be spent on creating good, safe and just jobs for all Floridians.

- **Allow Access to Drivers' Licenses**
 - When immigrants can't drive, it hurts all of Florida. It's very difficult for employees and employers. Our jails are being filled with individuals whose only crime is driving without a license. Our insurance rates are rising and our work productivity is decreasing as a result.
 - Furthermore, the REAL ID Act has become a burden on the state to implement with no help from the federal government. This unfunded mandate must be rejected, or a positive alternative should be explored by the state legislature.

- **Temporary Protective Status for Haitians**
 - Our Haitian Community forms much of the backbone of our state, but bears a significant burden due to the federal government's neglect. Nearly 800 Haitians died in 2008 as a result of numerous hurricanes—and more than 1 MILLION Haitians are homeless due to these conditions.
 - Before the storms, Haitians were already struggling due to a food crisis and political instability. If the U.S. government advises Americans that current conditions make it unsafe to travel to Haiti, the safety of forcibly repatriated Haitians cannot be guaranteed. We urge our elected officials to support H.R. 144, which would grant TPS to Haitian nationals.

- **Counter Anti-Immigrant Hate and Balance the Debate**
 - Vocal nativist groups attempt to sway the public with hateful anti-immigrant rhetoric in the media and through their networks, which encourages hate crimes in our communities. Elected officials must take a clear stand against anti-immigrant hate.
 - The public testimonies and debates on immigration must be dignified and include all of us. Before we agree on immigration policy, we must have a fair and balanced discussion that is not filled with enforcement-only voices and views.