

Need for COVID-19 Legislative Protections for Immigrants & Refugees

COVID-19 Presents Additional Threats to Immigrants and Refugees

- In a time of heightened uncertainty amidst COVID-19, immigrants and refugees across the country are facing extreme, unprecedented challenges - far beyond their current day-to-day hardships. Immigrants and refugees too are experiencing the loss of their jobs, wages, and health care. Many of their parents and loved ones may lack legal status and perform difficult, dangerous labor even in normal economic times; without any safety net or access to COVID-19 relief assistance, they face serious harm with the loss of a job and any source of income and are more likely to lack access to healthcare.
- The [Migration Policy Institute](#) (MPI) found that around 6 million immigrants work in the industries face the highest economic costs of COVID-19 and many are vulnerable.
 - Immigrants make up 20% of the workforce in industries facing major layoffs including food service, non-essential retail, building services, and personal services in private households.
 - 38% of immigrants working in the hard-hit industries (such as food and accommodation services, building services, etc.) are in low-income households and have income below 200% of the federal poverty line, compared to 30% of their U.S.-born counterparts.
 - 28% lack health insurance coverage, which is twice the rate of similar U.S.-born workers.
 - 38% of these immigrant workers have a minor child at home, compared to 23% of the U.S.-born workers.

Immigrants and Refugees Are Working on the Frontlines of the COVID-19 Response

- According to [MPI](#) the 6 million immigrants are employed as essential workers on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Immigrants make up 19% of America's essential workers. This includes 29% of doctors, 26% of manufacturing workers, 23% of pharmacists, and 27% of those in vital food service such as agriculture.
 - Immigrants make up 17% of America's workforce overall and thus are disproportionately represented on the COVID-19 frontline.
- Immigrants are vital to this country's capacity to combat the virus. They are working in hospitals treating patients, in the fields and factories ensure our access to food and all over the country keeping the economy going. When designing much needed relief packages for the American people, it is vital that we consider immigrant's considerable contributions and how they are made especially vulnerable by this crisis.
- According to a [New American Economy](#) study about refugees workers:
 - 161,000 refugees work in the healthcare sector as physicians, pharmacists, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, personal care aids, lab assistants, etc.

- 170,000 refugees work in the U.S. food supply chain in agriculture, food processing, wholesale, groceries, and food service and restaurants.

We Need COVID-19 Legislation that Includes Relief for Immigrants and Refugees, Too

- Immigrants make up large shares both of essential workers in the fight against the pandemic and those in the industries hardest hit by its economic impact. Many work long hours to ensure that food is available, that deliveries can continue, and that essential healthcare services can still be provided. They need to be protected. While there have been several legislative efforts to help our country address COVID-19, immigrants and refugees have largely been excluded from this assistance. We must do more to ensure that no one is left behind and that everyone, regardless of immigration status, is safe.
- Please see our [COVID-19 Migration Asks for Package #4](#).

What Does the Church and Catholic Teaching Say About This?

- The Catholic Church's deep concern for people seeking safety and access to healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic is grounded in Catholic social teaching and our collective experience serving people in need. The core tenet of our faith is the belief that every human life is sacred. In promotion of that belief, we advocate and provide service for all, but especially the most vulnerable: the unborn, the poor, the homeless, immigrants and refugees, the elderly and the mentally and physically infirm. As reflected in [Catholic teachings](#), the right to life extends to life-saving protection and the right to seek safety and to care for one's family.
- During this global pandemic and national emergency, access to treatment and care for immigrants, including undocumented individuals, is critical to tracking and responding to the crisis. Removing barriers to testing and treatment not only saves lives but keeps all Americans safer.