

April 20, 2020

Governor John Carney  
Office of the Governor  
820 N. French Street  
Wilmington, DE 19801

Dear Governor John Carney,

Our growing coalition of citizens and organizations committed to an equitable Delaware for immigrants in The First State, is writing to implore you to take immediate action to protect, serve, and provide relief for immigrants in Delaware impacted by the coronavirus crisis. We recognize the unprecedented nature of this pandemic but we also know it is your responsibility as the Governor of our state to support all Delawareans, regardless of where they were born. Yet, we are not seeing the type of urgency and actions that show this state's commitment to immigrant communities.

This is a matter of life or death for Delaware's immigrant communities. As you know, there has been an [increase in coronavirus cases among the Hispanic community in Sussex County](#). Immigrant workers are at the frontlines of keeping Delawareans healthy and fed during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also represent significant shares of workers cleaning hospital rooms, staffing grocery stores, and producing food. While immigrants are playing essential roles in the pandemic response, their physical and economic well-being has not been prioritized in this state.

The conditions under which many immigrants are working—including chicken producers in Delaware—are not safe and causing workers and their families to get sick. Immigrants are also over-represented in sectors most immediately devastated by mass layoffs: restaurants and hotels, office cleaning services, and in-home child care, among others. Yet, undocumented immigrants are excluded from relief packages and do not have the type of social safety net that may prevent a fast downward spiral for their families.

In the education system, we are seeing students from immigrant families get left behind as our state and district education leaders are not implementing the type of outreach and interventions needed for families with emerging English proficiency. With the lack of support with housing, healthcare, and employment for Delaware's immigrant population, so many students, both those who are unauthorized and those who are legally present, will have their educational opportunities curtailed.

This coronavirus has reminded us how despite our differences, our lives are all inextricably linked. Thus, if we ignore the needs of some Delawareans, we risk the health, safety, and financial stability of all Delawareans.

This is why we are urging your administration to take the following actions:

## **COVID-19 RELIEF FOR IMMIGRANTS IN DELAWARE**

### **1. Create a Delaware Disaster Relief Fund for Immigrants**

- a. Similar to the [approach employed in California](#), Delaware should provide financial assistance to undocumented Delawareans impacted by COVID-19 who are ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits and disaster relief, including the CARES Act, due to their immigration status.
- b. Work with the private sector and philanthropic sector to pool additional resources specific to the needs of this community. This could be a new fund or an expansion of the [Delaware COVID-19 Strategic Response Fund](#) that targets the unique needs of the immigrant community.

## **2. Protect Immigrant Workers' Rights**

- a. Outline publicly what this administration is doing to ensure the accountability or closure of plants, factories, and workplaces that fail to follow safety regulations and continue to risk the lives of many immigrants.
- b. Assign a liaison to oversee and monitor health and safety laws, which protect all workers, regardless of immigration status.
- c. The liaison should work directly with Department of Labor - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSH) enforcing standards and providing training, outreach, education, and assistance.
- d. Provide information and resources for workers in English and Spanish. It is critical that all immigrants know their rights at work and have the information and protections they need to ensure their health, safety, and wellbeing during this unprecedented time.

## **3. Create infrastructure for transparency and accountability related to COVID-19 relief for immigrants**

- a. Assign dedicated staff person in administration to oversee efforts to resolve gaps in relief efforts and funding for immigrants being disproportionately impacted during this pandemic.
  - i. This person should coordinate and collaborate with the Department of Education, Department of Labor, Department of Health & Social Services, and consult with the community.
  - ii. This person should ensure the state attracts and generates essential resources for the immigrant community (e.g. Pandemic-EBT, Federal Reserve Funds, Earned Income Tax Credit for ITIN filers, devoted state and local funds from the CARES Act for immigrants, public/private partnerships, obligation bonds for disaster relief/cash assistance).
- b. Hold weekly briefing meetings with advocates for the immigrant community to report on progress made and discuss support needed.
- c. Utilize the Family Services Cabinet Council (FSCC) to serve all Delaware Families including immigrants and mixed-status families.
- d. Require the education and healthcare systems track metrics and report throughout this crisis on the degree to which outreach to and supports for the Latino community regarding their health and education access are working.

Healthy communities are needed if we are going to survive this crisis and prevent future economic challenges across sectors in Delaware. Immigrants are taxpayers in the state of Delaware, without

access to benefits. COVID-19 does not exclude anyone based on immigration status; neither should relief efforts.

We appreciate your attention to this urgent matter. Now, it is time to include relief for everyone in the state.

### **IN THE WORDS OF DELAWARE IMMIGRANTS**

"I am worried about being able to receive testing and healthcare if I do get sick. There have not been resources made available saying that undocumented immigrants can get tested without repercussions, and I would drown in hospital bills if I got sick since I am uninsured. I'm also worried about inaccessibility regarding vaccines. This year, I had to go to Pennsylvania to get a flu shot, because Delaware clinics refused to give me one without an ID. I am scared the same will happen with the coronavirus vaccine when it comes out."

**-Adult female**

"As a child of an undocumented immigrant, I am afraid what this means for our family. Since we have a mixed-status family, I am nervous that if my parent lost his job, we wouldn't be able to receive benefits or afford food since my mother cannot work. I'm also nervous about my mother being unable to receive healthcare, because if one of us somehow caught it, she would be the only one without insurance, and in the past, has refused to go to the doctors until she was very sick, out of fear. I wish that ICE would suspend their operations nationwide to give undocumented immigrants more confidence that they could seek help during this time."

**-16-year-old female**

"Bad things are happening. I just want to go to another world and have peace so that I don't have to worry about school or viruses or bad things.... What if my father dies from the virus?"

**-10-year-old male**

"My parents have stopped working because the work is very limited. They used to work cutting mushrooms but the company stopped receiving as many mushroom orders. It's also difficult finding new jobs. I'm asked to look online for my dad but most places won't accept him. Thankfully we have some savings but we're afraid that we'll run out if the job opportunities continue to be this low. My biggest fear is that they'll make up their mind to return to Mexico. I'll most likely have to go with them, giving up on my dreams of pursuing higher education and even risking my closest relationships."

**-17-year-old female**

"The biggest worries we have aside from staying healthy is money. Both me & my mom work at hotels that have been shut down. Me, my mom, and my sister have all applied for unemployment because we all have car/ phone payments aside from the house bills. My sister and I are struggling with getting our unemployment benefits and every time we try calling unemployment offices, the phone either automatically ends the call or a machine tells us the line is too busy and hangs up as well."

**-17-year-old female**

## **OUR GROWING COALITION OF PARTNERS**

**ACLU of Delaware**

**Delaware Campaign to End Debtor's Prisons**

**Delaware Civil Rights Coalition**

**Latino Initiative on Restorative Justice**

**Latin America Community Center**

**Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (CLASI)**

**Sarah Stowens, Chapter leader Moms Demand Action**

**Network Delaware**

**Carla Guerrón Montero, PhD, Professor of Anthropology, University of Delaware**

**Coby Owens, Civil Rights Activist and Wilmington At-Large Member to the  
Delaware Democratic Party State Committee**

**Youth Caucus of America**

**First State Educate, Laurisa Schutt**

**Hoy en Delaware Spanish Newspaper**

**Nancy Lemus and Christopher Garcia community advocates.**

**Progressive Democrats of Sussex County**

**Coalition to Dismantle the New Jim Crow**

**H.O.M.E.S. Campaign**

**DelawareCAN: Delaware Campaign for Achievement Now**

**Juntos Delaware**

**Padres Latinos Delaware**

**Delaware Hispanic Commission**

**Delaware Alliance for Community Advancement**

**TeenSharp**

**Fouryouth Productions**

**UUDAN: Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network**

**THE HELPERS DELAWARE Pandemic Response**

**LOS AYUDANTES DELAWARE Respuesta a la Pandemia**