



Bill Summary: Improving Opportunities for New Americans Act of 2020

Background

The bipartisan *Improving Opportunities for New Americans Act of 2020* ([H.R. 8046](#)) would direct the Secretary of Labor to conduct a study examining the barriers to employment opportunities for immigrants and refugees in the United States who have international degrees or credentials. The bill highlights the enormous potential for immigrants and refugees to strengthen the American workforce and bolster the economy. Having immigrants and refugees working at their full potential together with American-born workers would be especially helpful as the nation faces the coronavirus pandemic and economic recovery. According to [research](#), over 2 million college-educated immigrants in the United States are unemployed or underemployed in low-or semi-skilled jobs that fail to draw on their education and expertise. U.S. House of Representatives John Katko (R-New York) and Ben McAdams (D-Utah) introduced the bill on August 14, 2020.

Bill Provisions

- **Require a study on factors affecting employment opportunities for immigrants and refugees with professional credentials obtained abroad.** The bill directs the Department of Labor to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the factors, including language barriers, accessibility of re-licensing processes, and availability of professional assistance, that prevent qualified immigrants and refugees from attaining employment commensurate with their credentials.

- **Encourage collaboration across government agencies and non-profits.** The bill instructs the Secretary of Labor to coordinate with a wide range of government agencies, including the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Education, and Health and Human Services, and relevant non-profit organizations to compile existing data and resources on the issues of immigrant employment.
- **Develop policy recommendations for future congressional action.** The bill directs the Department of Labor to create an analysis of existing public and private resources available to immigrants and refugees with previous professional experience and qualifications obtained outside of the United States. Furthermore, it would produce policy recommendations designed to enable new Americans to obtain skill-appropriate employment, thereby reducing the human and economic toll of “brain waste.”

Conclusion

The underutilization of immigrant’s and refugee’s professional skills is a long-standing issue that comes at a cost to all in unrealized wages, unrealized tax revenue, loss of talent, and loss of essential services. In the midst of both a pandemic and an economic recession, the United States must draw on the skills, expertise, and eagerness of immigrants and refugees already working shoulder-to-shoulder with Americans to contribute to this recovery effort and to future American growth and success. The *Improving Opportunities for New Americans Act of 2020* would provide a much-needed analysis of the present situation and issue recommendations for a brighter future that heightens the ability of immigrants and refugees to contribute and succeed at their full potential, and to work together with native-born Americans to get us through this pandemic and help our economy recover.