



## Why Businesses Should Support Immigration Reform

As President Trump considers various policy and regulatory changes to reduce costs and make American businesses more competitive, his administration has an opportunity to consolidate the United States as a global economic powerhouse by utilizing immigrant workers to fill needed workforce gaps. The new administration has repeatedly emphasized the importance of prioritizing American workers and is divided over the value of immigrant workers. However, smartly utilizing foreign-born workers in a time of low unemployment would lower prices for American consumers, create new jobs for American workers, and help American businesses become more competitive.

By extension, American businesses would uniquely benefit from needed legislative reforms and administrative changes to the immigration system, including addressing the status of Dreamers, the agricultural workforce, and others, as well as improvements to border security. Below are four reasons why businesses should support immigration reforms:

### 1. Immigrant Workers Can Help to Tackle America's Labor Challenges

Businesses need workers and, in many cases, are [struggling](#) to find them. The United States is facing acute [labor challenges](#). While many factors are causing the problem, reducing net international migration (NIM) levels – representing the lowest level in decades – has accelerated workforce deficits. This has had cascading effects across the economy, leading to a surge in inflation, lost opportunities for companies, and strains in supply chains across industries and economic sectors. [Incremental immigration reforms](#) that would increase legal immigration would represent a partial but helpful solution to labor shortages.

### 2. Many Industries Rely on Immigrant Workers

Immigrant workers are an essential part of the U.S. workforce, contributing across sectors and playing a noteworthy role in the U.S.'s economic health. The following industries represent just a handful of those who would benefit from legislative updates to our immigration system:

#### A. *Agricultural and Food Sectors*

America's agricultural and [food industry](#) heavily relies on migrant labor. Immigrants make up as much as 73% of farmworkers in the country. Additionally, approximately 3.8 million immigrants work in the U.S. food sector, representing more than one in five food workers. Immigrant farmworkers are pillars of the country's food supply chain and agricultural economic prosperity. They not only allow the United States to maintain a self-sufficient food supply and assure a level of food security, but they also help our nation become the largest exporter of food in the world. However, farmers and agricultural processors have limited access to legal workers, and most undocumented farmworkers have no pathway to permanent status. Existing programs like the H-2A agricultural seasonal worker program are cumbersome, exclude key industries like dairy products, and are [in need of reform](#).

#### B. *Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)*



One of America’s greatest strengths has been its ability to attract global talent to strengthen its technological and entrepreneurial competitiveness. Immigrants represent over a quarter of [STEM workers](#) in the United States. In addition, first- and second-generation immigrants have established 46% of the high-tech companies on the Fortune 500 list. Yet, even with these significant contributions, there still is a major labor shortage in STEM workers who help power these industries. Recent estimates show that STEM job openings in the country outnumber qualified workers by 3 million. This gap is projected to widen to 6 million by 2030. Businesses that rely on STEM workers need Congress to pass reforms to attract and retain foreign STEM talent, allowing for continued economic growth and technological advancement for the economy as a whole.

### *C. Healthcare Industry*

Foreign-born workers make up an [important](#) part of America’s healthcare workforce. They play a key role in the [home healthcare](#) industry, making up as much as 25% of personal care aides and 38% of home health aides, with demand for workers growing in coming years as the population ages. Foreign-born workers also represent as many as 28% of all highly-skilled healthcare professionals — like physicians and surgeons. Worryingly, [according](#) to the Association of American Medical Colleges, physician demand will grow faster than supply if all things remain equal, leading to a projected total shortage of between 54,100 and 139,000 physicians by 2033. Accordingly, it is critical to attract and retain immigrant healthcare workers. Congress can act to modernize existing visa programs and provide additional support for training and education to build out the available workforce in these sectors. It can also adopt legislation to allow essential immigrant workers—including health care workers—to earn permanent resident status and the possibility of citizenship.

### **3. Immigrant Workers Build a Stronger Economy**

In addition to directly benefiting from a stronger, larger immigrant workforce, U.S. businesses stand to benefit from increased economic growth and activity provided by immigrant workers.

[Immigrant workers](#) make up [18.6%](#) of the labor force in the United States. They pay taxes, buy local products, and run 28% of all Main Street businesses that supply necessities — such as gas stations, grocery stores, laundromats, and restaurants. Beyond their roles as workers and employers, immigrants also contribute significantly as [consumers](#). Immigrant households earn around [1.5 trillion dollars](#) in total income, wielding significant spending power that pumps much-needed money into local economies. They also pay more than [\\$651 billion in taxes annually](#). According to the [American Immigration Council](#), “immigrant (both legal and undocumented) households contribute \$16.80 of every \$100 tax dollars collected by federal, state and local governments funding a wide range of social services that benefit all Americans”.

Dreamers are a noteworthy subset of immigrant workers. [Dreamers](#) who work lawfully under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), play a critical role in the American economy. Through DACA, Dreamers can obtain work authorization, pay their fair share of taxes, and build businesses that hire American workers. Dreamers are employed in a wide range of occupations, including thousands who are self-employed. Due to these educational and employment opportunities, DACA recipients make substantial contributions in taxes and economic activity and fill vital roles in the U.S. workforce. Over the next ten years, it is estimated that DACA recipients will contribute an estimated \$433.4 billion to the GDP, including \$60 billion in fiscal impact and \$12.3 billion in taxes to Social Security and Medicare. However, due to ongoing



litigation, Dreamers continue to face uncertainty and will continue to do so [until Congress passes permanent protections for them](#). This uncertainty impacts not only Dreamers themselves but their families, friends, churches, and the businesses that employ them.

#### **4. Immigrants Help to Tackle America's Demographic Deficit**

Reforming the immigration system will also help address the challenges of an [aging](#) population. With baby boomers reaching retirement age, fertility rates falling, and net immigration levels not keeping pace, U.S. businesses will struggle amid a working-age population that is shrinking in relative terms. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly one in every four Americans is projected to be 65 years or older by 2060. At that point, 94.7 million people over age 65 will live in the country — nearly twice the number today. At the same time, the overall population is growing at a slower rate than it has in almost a century, leaving unfilled openings in crucial industries. Legislative reforms to the immigration system are essential to counter these trends and support the long-term health and prosperity of American businesses and the U.S. economy more broadly.

#### **Conclusion**

Reforming the U.S. immigration system is an economic imperative. Businesses benefit from needed immigration reforms to provide permanent solutions for Dreamers, the agricultural workforce, and other essential workers. These reforms, along with others, can help address ongoing labor shortages, fill job openings in key sectors dependent on immigrant labor, strengthen the U.S. economy, and address long-term demographic shortfalls.