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**OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING:** ASSESSING STATE POLICY AND PRACTICE

# IMMIGRANT POPULATION OVERVIEW

Special Concerns with Immigrants in occupational licensing.



## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

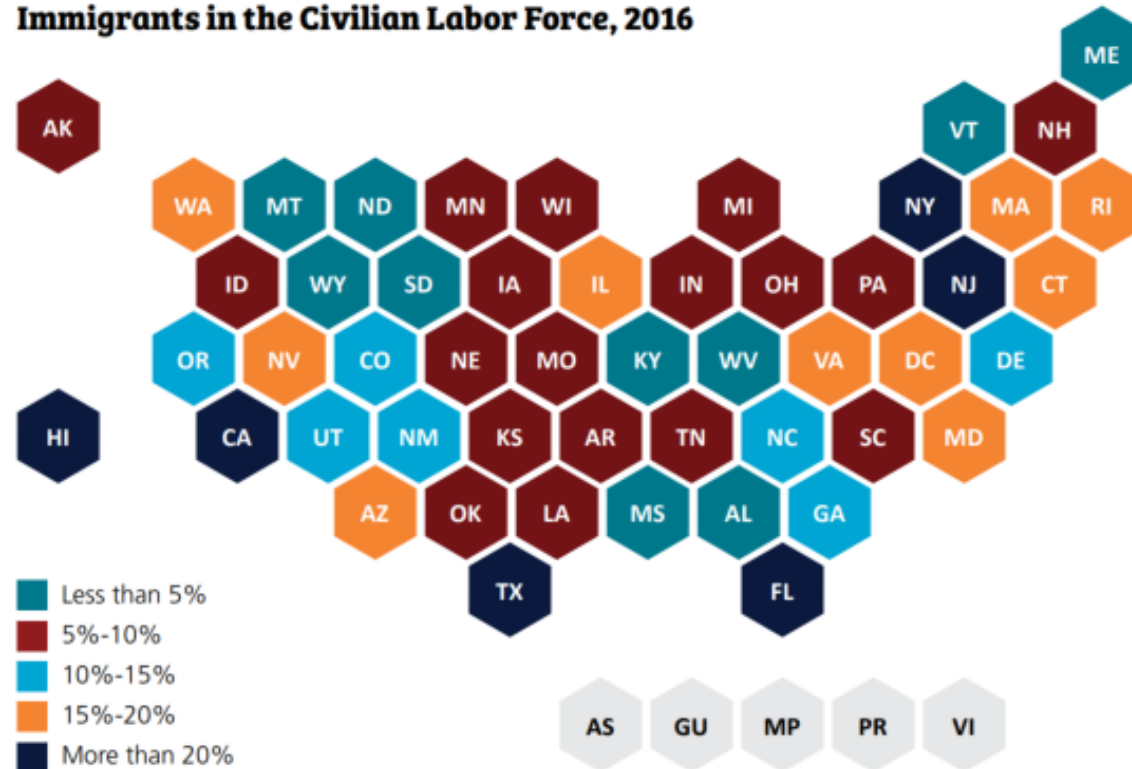
- Immigrants are 13.5 percent of the U.S. population.
  - 50% are naturalized citizens,
  - 30% are legal noncitizens, and
  - 20% are unauthorized immigrants.
- Immigrants are 17 percent of the U.S. workforce.
  - 57% are naturalized citizens,
  - 24% are legal permanent residents,
  - 8% have temporary visas, and
  - 11% are unauthorized.

## DEMOGRAPHICS IMMIGRANTS IN HEALTH CARE

- Immigrants represent a disproportionate share of health professionals:
- 28% of physicians and surgeons;
- 40% of medical scientists in manufacturing research and development;
- 22% of nursing, psychiatric and home health aides;
- 15% of registered nurses;
- 28% of in-home care aides.

# IMMIGRANTS IN THE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE

Immigrants in the Civilian Labor Force, 2016



Source: Migration Policy Institute

## HOW DOES OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING AFFECT IMMIGRANTS?

- MPI reports that  $\frac{1}{4}$  of immigration professionals are unemployed or underemployed (the “taxi-driving engineer”)
- This “brain waste” = \$40 billion in foregone wages/year & \$10 billion in lost federal, state and local taxes.
- Estimated US shortage of 5 million postsecondary workers by end of decade
- Opportunity for workers with untapped skills to fill state/regional labor shortages

## BARRIERS TO PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

- A survey of 4,000 college educated immigrants by IMPRINT and WES Global Talent Bridge found that the top barriers to practicing their profession were:
  - lack of U.S. work experience (47% of respondents).
  - employer didn't recognize foreign work experience (40%).
  - employer did not recognize foreign credentials (35%).

## BARRIERS TO OBTAINING PROFESSIONAL LICENSES

- Lack of Knowledge About Licensing
- Skill Gaps And Costs
- English Proficiency

## POLICY OPTIONS

- Task Forces/Offices To Develop Research And Policy Recommendations
- Modifying Licensing Requirements
- Addressing Skill Gaps And English Language Proficiency



## STATE EXAMPLES - MINNESOTA

- Physician shortages particularly in rural areas, an aging and diverse population, persistent health disparities and rising health care costs.
- The Legislature created a Foreign-Trained Physician Task Force to address barriers to practice for immigrant international medical graduates.
- Task Force recommendations led to partnerships among state government, employers and philanthropy. Legislation authorized \$500,000 in 2016 and in 2017 for the health care access fund.

## STATE EXAMPLES – UTAH, NEBRASKA

- Utah allows occupational therapists to be licensed if they meet the licensing requirements or have been licensed in a foreign country and pass an exam.
- Nebraska allows immigrants with work authorization to obtain professional or commercial licenses (includes DACA)

# CONCLUSION

- Models that address under- and unemployment by recognizing foreign work experience, supporting U.S. work experience, accepting foreign credentials, addressing skill deficits, improving English language proficiency and addressing licensing hurdles.
- States are:
  - creating taskforces;
  - partnering with companies, nonprofit organizations and community colleges to evaluate and encourage trained immigrant professionals to re-enter their fields;
  - establishing grants/funds to launch career pathways.

# RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFO

[Issue Brief: Improving Access](#)

[Blog State Solutions for Immigrant Professionals](#)

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