



ILLINOIS COALITION FOR IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE RIGHTS

2025 ICIRR Block, Bridge Build Policy Platform

Ratified by ICIRR's Membership on October 23, 2024

State Issues: Top Priorities

- **Win increased funding for Immigrant Services**

The Immigrant Service Line Item (ISLI) provides funding for direct cash assistance to immigrants, citizenship application assistance, English classes, DACA and citizenship application fee waivers, and resource navigation for immigrants throughout Illinois. The General Assembly has approved \$38 million for ISLI during each of the past three years, even as program costs have increased. We will seek an increase in funding for next year to catch up with those rising costs.

- **Protect and expand healthcare for ALL in IL (Healthy IL)**

Illinois has created state-funded programs that provide medical coverage for low-income immigrants age 42 or older and children age 18 and younger, regardless of their immigration status. The Health Benefits for Immigrant Seniors (HBIS) and Health Benefit for Immigrant Adults (HBIA) programs have been closed to new enrolled and subject to other cost-cutting measures since 2023. We will continue to defend these programs against harmful restrictions, and push to win additional funding to further expand coverage to include all other income-eligible immigrants regardless of their status.

- **Work beyond DACA and employment authorization**

If DACA ends as a result of court rulings or action by a future federal administration, we will need to make sure that people who have DACA will be able to continue to work, and that people who never had employment authorization (including many new arrivals but also long-term undocumented immigrants) are aware of the opportunities to work. We can work with the Illinois Secretary of State, the City of Chicago, and other agencies to promote models for work regardless of federal employment authorization, such as independent contracting and worker cooperatives, and to better enable immigrants to pursue these options. Specifically, we can work with organizations that have been supporting worker co-ops to seek

public and private funding to provide more resources and capacity for this support. This issue could become more urgent if DACA ends, whether through court rulings or action by a new federal administration.

- **Education for All**

The right to free public education hinges on the US Supreme Court's 1982 *Plyler* decision that anti-immigrant advocates want to overturn. The current Supreme Court has recently reversed numerous decisions that our communities have long relied upon. As the Supreme Court moves further to the right, and anti-immigrant forces get further emboldened, defending *Plyler* will become that much more urgent. We will guard against a bad court decision by writing into state law that every child in this state is entitled to free public education regardless of their own or their parents' status.

- **Support for new arrivals**

Illinois has welcomed more than 48,000 people arriving from the southern border since August 2022, most of whom were transported by buses organized by the State of Texas. While the pace of arrivals has slowed since early 2024, the people who have already arrived continue to need shelter, food, medical attention, and other care. ICIRR continues to call for more federal leadership and resources for these people, and to advocate on the state and local level for continued support as these new arrivals move toward self-sufficiency in their new community.

- **Progressive state revenue / Fund Our Futures**

Without expanded sources for state revenue, our ability to win programs that provide basic sustenance and economic justice for our communities (including several listed in this platform) will remain limited. We won an important victory for progressive revenue in 2024 when the General Assembly scaled back the "vendor discount" that retail stores can claim from their state sales tax collections, thus raising \$160 million per year in revenue. We will keep pushing for permanent solutions that will generate more than \$1 billion for the state, particularly from those who are better able to pay, so that all of our families will have the support they need to thrive.

- **Win continued cash assistance for those who are ineligible for federal public assistance, and move toward a future guaranteed income program**

Since 2020, ICIRR has administered the Immigrant Family Support Program (IFSP) to provide assistance to immigrant families who have been ineligible for COVID relief assistance and other public benefits. IFSP had received funding from federal ARPA dollars (which were exhausted in 2024) and state general revenue funds. The needs addressed by IFSP remain even as the COVID pandemic has subsided. We will push for further funding of this program beyond this fiscal year. We will also continue to advocate more broadly for a state-level guaranteed income program that can provide regular basic support for families in need.

- **Child Tax Credit**

We won an important victory in 2024 in creating the state's first child tax credit. This credit will provide important support for low- and middle-income households with children, including many immigrant families who use Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs) to file their returns. This new credit, however, still needs some fixes—including a minimum benefit amount—to provide relief for families who need the support the most, those with little or no income. We will push for these fixes so that the credit provides more help for more families.

State issues: Other initiatives we support

- **Third-party medical billing**

Even if they have medical coverage, many people seeking medical services often receive large bills for services not covered by their insurance. We plan to build on our 2023 victory winning legislation requiring hospitals to screen patients for medical coverage eligibility by restricting how much health care providers can demand from patients who need to arrange for payment plans. Our goal is to make health access affordable for everyone.

- **Restrict data sharing (Mijente and Just Futures Law)**

Even as many communities and states (including Illinois) have enacted policies limiting information sharing and other communication with ICE, ICE has still gained access to personal information from government agencies (such as the Illinois Secretary of State), utility companies, and other sources through third-party data brokers that buy this information and then sell access to ICE. Limiting the ability of state and local agencies to share this information (as we did with the driver's license bill that took effect in July 2024) would help protect

everyone's privacy and ensure that information for immigrants and other individuals will not be abused. We will continue to support our allies at Just Futures Law and Mijente to advocate with Cook County. While such data sharing has been happening regardless of which party controls the White House and Homeland Security, the issue will become more urgent under a Trump Administration "mass deportation" campaign.

- **Criminal legal reform (Cook County Public Defender)**

Our criminal legal system still channels immigrants into the deportation pipeline despite several existing laws intended to protect them from removal. ICIRR worked with allies among public defender offices, progressive state's attorneys, and immigrant advocates in 2024 to craft legislation to enable people with certain criminal convictions to ask to reopen their cases based on newly discovered evidence of innocence or lack of explanation of the immigration consequences of the conviction. We will support our allies as they push for this legislation in 2025.

- **Fund Jobs Not Jails! "SAFER Act" (Workers Center for Racial Justice)**

The SAFER Communities Act would promote job access for formerly incarcerated Illinoisans, improve public safety in our communities, and deliver economic relief for thousands of local businesses. This legislation would establish a living wage job creation program for up to 16,000 formerly incarcerated workers. This five year pilot program would offer local businesses wage subsidies of up to \$15,000 annually for employing workers with conviction records into newly created high-quality jobs. The bill would also deliver economic assistance to small businesses that hire formerly incarcerated workers to cover the cost of on-the-job training.

- **Fixing automatic voter registration (Illinois Secretary of State)**

ICIRR and our partners in the Just Democracy Coalition won a state law in 2016 setting up automatic voter registration for people seeking services at Secretary of State (SOS) facilities and other state offices. The SOS's office has been pushing for changes that would streamline voter registration processing. ICIRR and Just Democracy worked with SOS to ensure that these changes guard against mistaken registrations by noncitizens and include strong language access protections. We will support SOS as it pushes for our agreed bill in spring 2025 so that eligible citizens can get registered more easily while ineligible people are guarded against mistakes and misunderstandings.

National issues: Top priorities

- **Defend our communities from mass deportation and expanding detention and surveillance**

One presidential candidate has brazenly called for mass deportation of undocumented people, regardless of the fiscal, economic, and humanitarian toll. The current administration has been more quietly expanding the use of immigration detention and of electronic monitoring as an “alternative” to detention. We need to continue to resist these expansions of immigration enforcement and surveillance targeting our communities, ramp up our efforts to educate neighbors about their rights, and empower local leaders and allies to monitor and thwart ICE operations.

- **Defend DACA and other protections**

The next presidential term could see a concerted effort to rescind DACA, DALE, Temporary Protected Status (TPS), humanitarian parole, and other protections that previous administrations extended to people who are otherwise vulnerable to deportation. DACA is already under attack and might not withstand a court challenge. We will need to defend these programs and the people they protect with whatever tools we have available, and take advantage of any opportunities to advocate for broader protections.

- **Legalization for all (CHIRLA and other allies)**

Regardless of the outcome of the November elections, we need to keep advocating for a broad, generous legalization program that provides a clear path to citizenship for all undocumented people. Our counterpart in California, CHIRLA, and several other state-level coalitions have been organizing to win support for legislation to amend the registry provision in the immigration laws, which allow immigrants who arrived before a certain date (currently January 1, 1972) to apply for green cards. The proposal would create a "rolling registry" that would enable immigrants to legalize after seven years in the US. ICIRR will continue to support this registry proposal and other legislation to provide pathways to citizenship.

National issues: Other initiatives we support

- **Support for new arrivals**

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of arrivals has slowed since early 2024, the people who have already arrived continue to need shelter, food, medical attention, and other care. Unfortunately the federal government has provided only limited funding (which has been split among multiple states and communities) and minimal coordination and leadership. ICIRR will continue to call for more federal leadership and resources for these people.

- **LIFT the Bar**

Under the 1996 welfare laws, most immigrants are ineligible for Medicaid and other federal public benefits up to five years after they receive their green cards. This five-year bar harms immigrant families who need health care and other support and hurts our entire community. The LIFT the BAR and HEAL Acts would remove these restrictions and enable immigrants who are able to get green cards to receive the care they need.