

Immigration

National Council of Jewish Women works to advance the well-being of children and families. We believe that:

- Individual liberties guaranteed by the Constitution are the keystones of a free society and must be protected and preserved.
- Human rights and dignity are fundamental and must be guaranteed to all individuals.
- A democratic society and its people must value diversity and promote mutual understanding and respect for all.

National Council of Jewish Women works to ensure and advance individual and civil rights, including:

- Comprehensive, humane and equitable immigration and naturalization laws, policies, and practices that facilitate a path to legal status.

We urge the Legislature to:

- **Support HB 277 (Alonzo)**, which adds identity documents from foreign governments to the list of identifying documents for a driver's license. All people on the Texas roads are safer when all drivers are licensed and insured.
- **Support HB 540 (Alzono)**, which prohibits local governments from regulating residential tenancies based on someone's immigration status. This bill protects immigrant access to housing. It is not the responsibility of local governments to determine immigration status; only the federal government can do so.
- **Support SB 361 (Watson) and HB 823 (Anchia)**, which would require a magistrate to inform an arrested person of the consequences of a plea of guilty or nolo contendere and that it could affect the person's immigration or residency status and result in deportation. It is important for all to understand their rights and consequences of their actions. A magistrate would ensure that this happens.
- **Support SB 526 (Rodriguez)**, which prevents law enforcement from asking the legal status or nationality of a witness to or victim of a crime, "except as necessary to investigate the offense" or to provide information about available visas. Local law enforcement needs to preserve its established trust with immigrant communities. Enquiring about a victim's or witness's immigration status would discourage him/her from reporting crimes and increase the risk of racial profiling. The ultimate consequence would be a decline in over-all public safety.
- **Oppose HB 122 (Larson)**, which would repeal in-state tuition for undocumented residents of Texas. Colleges and universities are not equipped to make complex immigration decisions. Texas should be promoting higher education, not creating unnecessary barriers to it. Our economic future depends on educating the young people of Texas, whether they were born here or were brought to the state by their parents. In order to have a strong economy, we must raise the caliber of our workforce through the higher education and technical training available in our colleges and universities. Additionally, in-state tuition is not the same as free tuition. It is a discount, but the money paid by these students actually tends to increase school revenues because it represents income that would not otherwise be there.

- **Oppose HB 119 (Larson) and HB 219 (White)**, which would require public and private agencies that provide educational, correctional, medical, or social services and receive money from the state to report on the cost of providing those services to citizens of other countries or to undocumented persons. Larson's bill would request reimbursement for these costs from foreign governments for their citizens. White's bill would request reimbursement from the federal government for undocumented persons. It is not the role of these agencies to determine immigration status, and it could make it more difficult for targeted populations to obtain needed services. Immigration and citizenship law is very complex and employees of these agencies are not trained to apply it accurately. Both bills would impose a costly unfunded mandate on these agencies with little hope for reimbursement.
- **Oppose HB 181 (Zedler)**, which would prohibit the construction or operation by a local governmental entity of a day labor center used to facilitate the employment of undocumented persons. This bill presumes that only undocumented persons use day labor centers, which is untrue. This bill hurts the ability of workers to provide for themselves and their families. People have a constitutional right to engage in free speech in public places. These laborers are offering to work and potential employers are free to ask if they want a job. Day labor sites are better alternatives than having people stand along the sides of roads.
- **Oppose HB 359 (Krause)**, which would require local law enforcement agencies to determine the immigration status of a person who has been arrested and report that to Immigration and Customs Enforcement and to the presiding judge. Since this must be done at the time of arrest, not conviction, this bill may affect many people proven innocent of criminal charges. It also attempts to put local law enforcement in the role of regulating immigration, an area that should be left to Congress and federal agencies.
- **Oppose HB 559 (Burkett), HB 615 (Harless), HB 676 (Ratliff), and HB 954 (Button)**, which would mandate the use of the federal electronic employment verification system known as E-verify. The current E-verify system has serious flaws that make it unworkable, a problem that is widely acknowledged. Overly cautious employers could discriminate against workers they think look like undocumented immigrants, whatever their actual legal status. Enforcement of immigration law is the jurisdiction of the federal government, and these proposed laws would constitute an expensive unfunded mandate on employers.
- **Oppose HJR 51 (Murphy)**, which would deny bail for an undocumented person who is arrested on a felony charge. Judges already have wide discretion in deciding whether and in what amount to set bail – and probably take into consideration whether an accused is undocumented, making this an unnecessary law that does nothing to promote public safety. This would also put an undue burden on the court to determine whether a person has legal status in the U.S.; these are often complicated questions best dealt with by federal law and agencies.

Our country needs realistic, just, and humane immigration policies. Many NCJW members' parents and grandparents came to the US for the same reasons that attract immigrants today – to find work and a better life for their families. NCJW is committed to ensuring fundamental rights for citizens and non-citizens alike, and Texas has the responsibility to ensure that those rights are not stripped away. Immigrants – both legal and undocumented – contribute to the economy in virtually every community in Texas, just as every other immigrant population throughout US history has done.