



EVERY TEXAN

Formerly Center for Public Policy Priorities

Testimony to the Public Education Committee on Interim Charge #2

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Today, we are here to talk about educating children seeking refuge and opportunity in Texas. Because we have yet to accept as a society that being “American” is not solely defined by one’s birth in the United States, we continue to debate issues that were settled years ago. Our friends from MALDEF and IDRA will address the federal guarantees made in *Plyler v Doe*. Before they do, I will remind you that we are once again discussing issues that federal courts have already decided.

Immigrants have long been the favorite punching bag for people who were — if not their ancestors — also recent migrants to Texas. Not even the Comanche who dominated Texas well into the 19th Century could consider themselves “native” to the land. (They were originally from the high plains and eastern steppe of the Rockies.) We’re all immigrants to Texas, and we would all be better for remembering that when considering changes to public policy.

Every Texan rejects the premise that any child could be a burden to our state because all children deserve an education regardless of their place of birth. Empowered with a Texas public education, immigrant children – like their parents – pay forward any benefits they might receive. Taking the cost of public education into account, the Texas Comptroller special report “Undocumented Immigrants in Texas” of 2006 and the 2020 update by the Baker Institute show immigrants to the United States overwhelmingly benefit the Texas economy.¹

Immigrants, whose children we’re talking about, have more than \$100 billion in yearly purchasing power. According to our 2017 report “[Immigrants Drive the Texas Economy](#),” immigrants make up 18.4 percent of Texas business owners with paid employees and are self-employed at a higher rate (9.4 percent) than the Native-born population (5.8 percent).² These are people who are contributing to the general revenue fund, and by doing so, paying for their child’s education like every other Texas taxpayer. If the public school system is feeling strained, it’s not the immigrant or refugee’s fault. To the contrary, immigrants may help us solve many of the problems our schools and economy as a whole are facing.

¹ Strayhorn, “Undocumented Immigrants in Texas,” (2006), https://www.fosterglobal.com/policy_papers/TexasAnalysisCost-BenefitOfUndoccdWorkers.pdf;

Rodriguez-Sanchez, “Undocumented Immigrants in Texas,” (2020), <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/files/15839/>

² Immigrants Drive the Texas Economy, https://everytexan.org/images/EO_2017_02_ImmigrantsInTexas.pdf

Since Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) took effect, more than 1,600 kids educated in Texas went on to become teachers in Texas as DACA recipients. Parents of immigrant children are paying for their education, and those kids are growing up to fill the desperately vacant positions in our school system, an incalculable benefit to the state.

We face dire labor shortages in our public schools and it would be foolish — as it has been foolish — to cut off our nose to spite our face by questioning the impact of people who have and continue to benefit our state and nation.

Facts about Immigrants in Texas:

- Estimated unauthorized Population in Texas as of 2019 = 1,739,000
 - 64% (1,113,000) have lived here 10+ years
 - 21% (364,000) are under 25 years of age
 - 87% (116,000) of the 133,000 ages 3 to 17 are enrolled in school.³
- Immigrants comprised 29 percent of all parents of children ages 0 to 4 and 31 percent of all parents of children ages 5 to 10 in Texas.⁴
- Among immigrant parents of children ages 0 to 4, 69 percent were Latino and 19 percent were AAPI;
- The immigrant parents of children ages 5 to 10, 70 percent were Latino and 19 percent were AAPI.
- Meanwhile, roughly half of U.S.-born parents of children in both age bands were White, with smaller but significant populations of Latino (approximately 34 percent) and Black (13 percent) parents.
- Among immigrant parents, 26 percent of those with children ages 0 to 4 and 31 percent with children ages 5 to 10 were naturalized U.S. citizens.
- Immigrant parents of children ages 0 to 4 were significantly more likely to have lived in the United States for less than eight years as compared to those with children ages 5 to 10, and
- less than half (39 percent) of parents of children ages 0 to 4 had lived in the United States for 16 or more years, as compared to 51 percent for those with children ages 5 to 10.
- One in six working immigrant parents of children ages 0 to 4 and ages 5 to 10 in Texas were employed in industries vital to the COVID-19 response.

³ Profile of the Unauthorized Population: Texas,

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/TX>

⁴ Texas's Immigrant and U.S.-Born Parents of Young and Elementary-School-Age Children Key Sociodemographic Characteristics,

https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpi_nciip_parents-children-0-4-and-5-10-tx-2021_final.pdf