

Professional Licensure Means an Inclusive Workforce and a Better Future for New Mexico

Yazmin Irazoqui Ruiz, who has lived in New Mexico since the age of three, is a fourth-year medical student at the University of New Mexico. Although Yazmin will graduate with her Medical Doctorate in May of 2020, she will not be able to practice medicine even as a Deferred Action Childhood Arrival (DACA) recipient. She would like to continue her training as a surgeon here in New Mexico and, ultimately, provide care for New Mexico families. But, unless the state Legislature acts, she won't be able to pursue her dream. Yazmin is considering leaving New Mexico in order to be able to practice, but her heart is here.

Like most states, New Mexico has a shortage of many of the professionals whose occupations require licensure - most notably, doctors, dentist, and teachers. We cannot afford to lose talented professionals. Right now we have the opportunity to remove such barriers like other states have successfully done.

Our New Mexico legislators can remove licensure barriers and create a more inclusive workforce for students like Yazmin, by passing SB-137. We must utilize the untapped talents and expertise within our immigrant community. When everyone can contribute to our state, we all win. New Mexico children, families, and communities all benefit from a stronger, diverse, and qualified professional workforce.



Professional Licensure is Needed Now

- » A professional license is required in order to work in many professions – from being a doctor or dentist to being a real estate agent, social worker, even a hairdresser.
- » Licensure is important for minimizing the public's risk because it ensures that people have the necessary education and expertise before they work in certain professions.
- » Professional licensure is regulated by both federal and state laws. 10 other states have enacted laws providing licensing for immigrants to obtain professional licensure.
- » Currently, undocumented immigrants cannot apply for professional licensure in New Mexico even when they have all the education, training, and other qualifications.

Our state can remove licensing obstacles for qualified New Mexico immigrants ready to practice in their chosen profession.



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How can we solve this problem?

Although it is a federal law that requires immigrants to have documentation in order to become licensed, the federal government allows states to enact policy that provide a pathway for qualified immigrants to access professional licensing. New Mexico can utilize its legal right to remove obstacles for qualified immigrants and join the many other states that have already done so, thereby strengthening our workforce and economies.

Why is this policy needed in New Mexico?

- » It would help fill important jobs where we have shortages – like dentists and teachers.
 - » It would boost our state's economy and generate new tax dollars.
- » It would help stop the "brain drain" and attract more qualified professionals to our state.

Facts about New Mexico's immigrant population

- » Evidence shows that children born to immigrant families are upwardly mobile and that undocumented immigrants are productive members of society.
 - » Almost one in six adult immigrants in New Mexico has a college degree.
 - » New Mexico is home to about 6,000 DACA recipients.
 - » Immigrants contribute hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes every year.

The state has the power to remove license barriers. These outdated laws prevent talented, hardworking immigrants from contributing their skills to our state. The answer is clear – the barring of licensure is hurting our communities and economy, and New Mexico needs to act. New Mexico's 2020 Legislature can enact legislation to provide professional licensure to qualified New Mexico immigrants.

Let's build a stronger, diverse, and inclusive workforce!

