



# THE CITIZENSHIP FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS ACT

**Topline:** The Citizenship for Essential Workers Act provides undocumented essential workers with a fast, accessible, and secure path to citizenship, beginning with immediate adjustment of status to legal permanent resident. This legislation is a critical part of a just and inclusive COVID-19 recovery.

## WHO ARE UNDOCUMENTED ESSENTIAL WORKERS?

- There are **5.2 million undocumented immigrants working in jobs that have been designated essential** during the COVID-19 pandemic. This accounts for **almost 3 out of 4 undocumented workers in the United States.**
- From janitors cleaning hospital floors, to farm workers picking America's crops, to EMTs and nurses saving lives, undocumented essential workers have done the jobs that can't be done remotely - putting their lives on the line so other Americans would not have to.
- As a result of their high rates of exposure, **immigrant essential workers and their families have borne high costs**, being **likelier to contract and die from COVID-19** which contributes to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color.
- Of the approximately 5 million undocumented essential workers, around 1 million would be defined as "Dreamers" under the American Dream and Promise Act, with many holding DACA status. The other 4 million plus undocumented essential workers largely lack any protection from deportation, meaning **a worker deemed essential today could be deported tomorrow.**
- In addition to helping Americans stay healthy and fed during the COVID-19 crisis, **undocumented essential workers are also an engine of economic prosperity.** Undocumented workers **contribute up to \$79.7 billion in federal taxes and \$41 billion in state and local taxes annually.**

### SOURCES:

[1] <https://www.fwd.us/news/immigrant-essential-workers/>

[2] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7241973/>

[3] <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/reports/2020/12/02/493307/protecting-undocumented-workers-pandemics-front-lines/>

## WHAT DOES THE CITIZENSHIP FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS ACT DO?

- Adjustment of Status to Legal Permanent Resident under the Citizenship for Essential Workers Act is **open to any non-citizen worker in the sectors of:**
  - Health care
  - Agriculture
  - Construction
  - Emergency response
  - Sanitation
  - Food
  - Restaurants
  - Hotels and hospitality
  - Meat, fish, and poultry processing
  - Domestic work
  - Childcare
  - Disaster recovery
  - Home health and residential care
  - Manufacturing
  - Warehousing
  - Transportation and logistics
  - Janitorial
  - Laundry services
  - Any other worker deemed essential by the Department of Homeland Security or state or local government.
- The Citizenship for Essential Workers Act **will also include undocumented workers who worked in essential industries but lost employment** due to COVID-19, including leaving the job due to unsafe working conditions, **as well as undocumented relatives of an essential worker who died from COVID-19.**
- Applicants for adjustment of status will be required to pay a reasonable fee and go through a background check. **All information provided or disclosed in an application for this act may not be used for enforcement purposes.**
- The Citizenship for Essential Workers Act also **aims to preserve family unity by** repealing the three- and ten-year bars for re-entry into the United States.

## WHY SUPPORT THE CITIZENSHIP FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS ACT?

- Undocumented workers have been essential during the pandemic and will be just as essential during the recovery. Over 60 top economists recently made that case in [a letter urging the Biden administration to include a pathway to citizenship](#) for undocumented immigrants as part of COVID-19 relief, pointing that **such a policy would increase prosperity and reduce poverty for all Americans.**
- This legislation is **the broadest stand-alone pathway to citizenship** proposed by Congress for any specific group of immigrant workers and **can be part of a broader COVID-19 relief and economic recovery package.**

### SOURCES:

[4] <https://www.fwd.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Economists-Letter-on-Legalization-and-Recovery.pdf>