



Vermont Access to Justice Coalition

The Case for Immigration Civil Legal Services in 2025

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Policy and Economic Landscape. Federal legal contexts are rapidly evolving, with both opportunities for humanitarian status and heightened barriers. Vermont faces unique challenges but also significant opportunities:

- **Workforce Necessity:** Immigrants are essential to Vermont's economy, contributing \$226.3 million in taxes and holding \$619.9 million in spending power annually.
- **Demographic Crisis:** Vermont's aging population crisis underscores the need for immigrant workforce integration.
- **Demographic Solution:** Immigrants are Vermont's fastest-growing working-age demographic and are 80% more likely to start businesses.
- **Service Fragmentation:** Immigrants face obstacles in accessing the legal services they need pursue immigration-sensitive licensing, education, entrepreneurship, and work.

Cost Savings from Legal Aid Investment. Investing in immigration legal aid is not just compassionate—it makes fiscal sense:

- **Return on Investment:** A 2019 study by the Vermont Judiciary Access to Justice Coalition show an \$11 return for every \$1 invested in legal aid, thanks to reduced domestic violence, eviction, and family crises.
- **Workforce Stability:** Immigration legal aid facilitates access to work permits and other status resolutions, directly benefiting Vermont's economy in the forms of helping immigrants to secure housing and accessing financial services; enroll and keep children in school and access healthcare; and starting or operating businesses within regulated industries.
- **System Efficiency:** Streamlined legal processes prevent costly emergency interventions and reduce administrative burdens.

Evidence-Based Needs.

- **National Best Practices:** A report from the White House Council of Economic Advisers found that extending permanent legal status to unauthorized immigrants would contribute \$7 trillion to the U.S. economy and \$1 trillion to federal revenues due to high employment.
- **Research-Backed Solutions:** A \$200,000 two-year study by Vermont Poverty Law Fellow Maya Tsukazaki, directed by the Vermont Judiciary Access to Justice Coalition, offers actionable recommendations for upstream investment to prevent downstream costs:
 - Join the national movement toward universal representation.
 - Streamline immigration intake for coordinated service prioritization.
 - Allocate state-funded services to support legal service networks.
 - Legislate state-level legal reforms.
 - Unite the fight for justice across legal, social, and economic dimensions.

Economic and Social Return on Investment

- **Cost Savings:** Coordinated high quality investment in legal services promotes access to regularized status notwithstanding Vermont's status as an immigration legal services "desert" per the national Immigrant Justice Corps.
- **Preventative Interventions:** Addressing root causes reduces housing instability, emergency healthcare, and law enforcement costs.
- **Economic Growth:** Immigrant integration fuels entrepreneurship and fills critical labor shortages.

Conclusions. Access to immigration legal services is a proven solution to unlock immigrant participation in the regulated economy. Investing in legal services for Vermont's immigrant communities means expanding their capacity to earn, spend, and contribute to Vermont's tax base, a crucial step in maintaining the state's social and economic health and future prosperity.