



# **Gov. Pritzker Signs Legislation Further Establishing Illinois As The Most Welcoming State In The Nation**

August 2 2021 2:21 PM



AURORA – Governor JB Pritzker today signed HB 121, SB 667, SB 1596 and SB 2665 into law, legislation expanding protections for immigrant and refugee communities and further establishing Illinois as the most welcoming state in the nation.

The new laws strengthen the TRUST Act and make Illinois the second state in the nation to require local officials to end partnerships with ICE, address hate crimes against immigrant communities, expand workplace protections for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, and create the Illinois Immigration Impact Task Force to ensure state programs and policies best serve immigrant residents.

Governor Pritzker also signed an executive order creating the Welcoming Illinois Office, to report to the Office of the Governor and the Secretary of the Department of Human Services while being housed and supported by the Department of Human Services. The Office will work to coordinate, develop and implement policies and practices to make Illinois a more welcoming and equitable state for immigrants and refugees. The Office will be led by the Senior Immigration Fellow.

“Throughout my governorship I’ve directed my administration to adopt policies that make Illinois a welcoming state for immigrants, and I’m proud to sign these accountability measures into law to advance our cause,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Every family, every child, every human being deserves to feel safe and secure in the place they call home. I am committed to making sure that value defines what it means to live in Illinois.”

Today’s actions build on the governor’s ongoing efforts to protect the safety and wellbeing of immigrant and refugee families. The Governor previously signed legislation into law that banned the establishment of private, for-profit immigrant detention centers and took action to prevent landlords from wrongfully using a tenant’s immigration status against them. The administration also acted to provide undocumented students with access to state financial aid.

During the pandemic, the administration also offered a wealth of relief aimed at all Illinois families regardless of their immigration status, to protect their health, wellbeing, and economic security.

“Fundamental protections for immigrant communities are essential to the welfare of all Illinoisans. I’m thankful for Governor Pritzker’s leadership and the work of the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus to ensure that Illinois continues embracing and providing for our immigrant communities. I’m additionally grateful to our community advocates as

they've continued to prioritize the needs of immigrants in the presence of unique and targeted roadblocks,” said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton. “I look forward to working with these stakeholders as we build upon our joint efforts to protect and further the interests of Illinois’ immigrant population.”

HB 121 expands protections for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients by adding a new definition for ‘work authorization status’ to the Illinois Human Rights Act. The change clarifies that it is a civil rights violation for employers to refuse to hire, segregate, or engage in harassment on the basis of work authorization status.

“Today Illinois takes a leadership role by being the second state in the U.S. amending the Illinois Human Rights Act to protect against discrimination on the basis of federal work authorization status, ensuring all workers are treated fairly and equally,” said Griselda Vega Samuel, Regional Counsel for the Mexican American Legal and Educational Fund. “As important is SB 1596 which amends the hate crime section of the criminal code by recognizing crimes motivated by anti-immigrant bias. MALDEF celebrates the passage of these bills that protect and respect the human dignity of all Illinoisans by ensuring they can live and work free from harassment and discrimination.”

SB 667 strengthens the Illinois TRUST Act and the Voices of Immigrant Communities Empowering Survivors (VOICES) Act to protect immigrant families in Illinois. The legislation:

- Provides clarity around action that law enforcement officials can and cannot take around warrants.
- Prohibits state or local governments from signing contracts with the federal government to unjustly detain immigrants.
- Places limitations on local enforcement of discriminatory practices by prohibiting officials from inquiring about the citizenship or immigration status of an individual in custody unless they’re presented with a federal criminal warrant, or otherwise required by federal law.
- Increases transparency by requiring state and local law enforcement agencies to submit annual reports regarding requests from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- Authorizes the Attorney General to conduct investigations into violation of the Illinois TRUST Act.

“For years, immigration and customs enforcement agencies have relied on local law enforcement to target people who pose no threat to public safety, which just drives fear in immigrant and Latino communities and breaks the trust between people and law

enforcement,” said Leader Lisa Hernandez (D-Cicero). “By adding additional teeth to the TRUST Act, we are taking steps to make sure our families aren’t afraid to take their children to school, seek medical attention, attend court hearings, utilize public services or seek police protection.”

“With Illinois Way Forward, we have taken a huge step toward becoming the most welcoming state in the nation,” said Lawrence Benito, Executive Director of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. “Ending ICE detention in Illinois will protect immigrant communities from the deportation machine. Now, it’s time to pass the baton from Illinois to D.C., where President Biden and Congress must take the next step by reining in ICE and passing a pathway to citizenship now.”

“The Illinois Way Forward Act is a huge victory for the immigrant community because we’ve greatly reduced ICE’s ability to separate me, my family and my community from our homes,” said Hwangchan Yu, a community leader HANA Center, an ICIRR coalition member. “With this victory we are ready to continue organizing to address the separation of families and communities, inhumane treatment, and the exploitation of our work and labor in this country.”

“Immigrant communities urgently need justice, and the bills Governor Pritzker is signing today make Illinois a model for our nation on how to protect and defend immigrants and mixed-status families. As the author of the federal New Way Forward Act, I am particularly proud to see the Illinois Way Forward become law to finally bring an end to the dangerous collaboration between ICE and local police in our state,” said Congressman Jesús “Chuy” García (D-IL 4<sup>th</sup> District). “These bills mark a crucial step towards protecting immigrants and decriminalizing immigration, but our work is not done. We need a pathway to citizenship for all immigrants, and I will keep fighting in Congress to make it happen.”

SB 1596 expands protections against immigrant communities by amending the Criminal Code of 2012 to include hate crimes based on citizenship and immigration status. The changes will also assist law enforcement officials in identifying and reporting anti-immigrant hate crimes separate from other hate crimes, including to the FBI hate crimes database.

“In recent years we have seen an alarming spike in hate crimes against many groups, including Asian Americans during the pandemic,” said Representative Theresa Mah (D-Chicago). “Adding protections against hate crimes motivated by anti-immigrant bias helps to ensure that more of our community members are able to seek and find justice if they are targeted in this manner.”

SB 2665 creates the Illinois Immigration Impact Task Force to study how state policies and programs affect immigrant residents. The Task Force will consist of 27 members and require the Department of Human Services to staff and examine a number of issues. The Task Force will submit a report with its findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly on or before May 31, 2022.

“This task force will help determine where improvements can be made in how the state invests in immigrant communities,” said Senator Celina Villanueva (D-Chicago). “We must address systemic disinvestment in our communities across the state and continue building a recovery that works for all Illinoisans, regardless of status.”

“Many of the constituents I represent did not have the benefit of working from home. Due to their socio-economic status, many had no choice but to continue to work. Immigrants also face additional systemic barriers to access state services including language barriers,” said Leader Aarón M. Ortiz (D-Chicago). “Immigrant communities saw the highest and most disproportionate rates of infection during the COVID-19 pandemic and little relief from the federal government. The creation of this task force is important and needed to examine the impacts of systemic disinvestment and the pandemic on immigrant communities throughout Illinois.”

HB 121, SB 667 and SB 2665 are effective immediately.

SB 1596 is effective January 1, 2022.