

April 9, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor of the State of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

We write to express our appreciation for your tremendous leadership in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and for your long track record of advancing justice, equity, and inclusion. We also wish to express our strong support of your leadership in protecting and assisting the more than two million undocumented Californians who are excluded from federal relief under the CARES Act and the thousands of immigrants in California who are still subject to harsh immigration enforcement and detention, increasing their exposure to COVID-19. In a pandemic that does not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, or citizenship status, excluding immigrants from relief programs and protection from harsh enforcement actions threatens our state's economic and social resilience and future prosperity.

Federal exclusions of undocumented immigrants undermine the health and wellbeing of all Californians. Our immigrant neighbors, coworkers, and friends are vital to our economic, civic, and cultural fabric. For example, immigrant farm workers, who number between 500,000 and 800,000, have been designated "essential workers." In addition, an estimated five million U.S. citizen children in California live in mixed-status households; providing relief to undocumented parents will support California's children and families at this critical time.

As philanthropic organizations committed to justice, equity, and inclusion, we urge the State to protect and support immigrant Californians as it considers important funding and policy decisions within the context of the Executive branch's COVID-19 pandemic response. Specifically, we are requesting that you exercise your Executive Authority to take these six important steps:

1. **Expand access to safety-net programs for all currently ineligible low-income immigrants, including:** Unemployment Insurance; Paid Sick Leave; health and nutrition programs such as Medi-Cal and the California Food Assistance Program; Cash Assistance for Immigrants, and; California's Earned Income Tax Credit and Young Child Tax Credit.
2. **Establish a direct relief fund to provide cash assistance to immigrant Californians who are ineligible for federal aid.** California philanthropic organizations have quickly mobilized millions of dollars in emergency funding, including funding to support community organizations serving impacted immigrants and individual cash assistance programs for extremely vulnerable workers (e.g., day laborers, domestic workers, street vendors, restaurant and hospitality workers, farmworkers, and others). Many of us are also organizing a statewide direct relief fund and would welcome coordinating with direct relief fund efforts by the State.
3. **Ensure that immigrant Californians have access to PPE, workplace safety, childcare, and technology.** Immigrants are essential to California's workforce. They supply food, home care, and myriad other critical services to all of our families and communities. Those who are still working urgently need PPE, enforcement of labor rights to ensure their health and safety, and childcare assistance. In addition, most undocumented Californians are parents who lack access to technology for home schooling their children.

4. **Ensure that all immigrants, regardless of their immigration status, have access to COVID-19 information, testing, and treatment** as part of the State's effort to flatten the curve and address impact. This includes multilingual health services and emergency announcements and free testing at mobile units in hard-to-reach communities.
5. **Halt the expansion of immigration detention in the state, suspend the transfer of individuals from state and local custody to ICE, and advocate with ICE for the release of immigrants in detention in California.** These measures would support the State's efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and its impact on vulnerable communities.
6. **Strengthen the ONE California immigration legal assistance programs.** With job losses and reduced work hours due to the pandemic, more low-income immigrant workers will urgently need free and low-cost legal services.

In recent years, California has emerged as a resilient economy and society because of its commitment to policies that protect and include vulnerable residents, among them immigrants regardless of their federal immigration status. In the fight against this pandemic, we are all in this together, and we urge you to prioritize supporting immigrant Californians in this critical time. We look forward to working with your office to advance California's response to the COVID 19 pandemic and our eventual road to a collective recovery. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your administration to learn more about the State's efforts to protect immigrant Californians and ways we might partner with you to ensure that all Californians are supported during and after this crisis.

Again, we thank you for your leadership in these unprecedented times and are at your disposal to discuss how we can work even more closely together to meet the needs of our state.

Respectfully,

Christopher Punongbayan, Executive Director  
*California ChangeLawyers*

Antonia Hernandez, CEO  
*California Community Foundation*

Dr. Robert K. Ross, President & CEO  
*The California Endowment*

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cc: Ann O'Leary, Chief of Staff