Data Snapshot of Immigrants in California: Effective COVID Relief Depends on the Inclusion of Immigrants

The COVID-19 crisis has shown that we are interconnected: the health and prosperity of each of us depends on the health and prosperity of all of us. Yet, the legislation enacted to date has excluded millions of immigrants and their families from health care and economic relief. A response that leaves out immigrants and their families in California—many of whom are providing care for our loved ones and delivering groceries—will undermine our public health and economic recovery. This data snapshot describes immigrants in California, some of the barriers to accessing health care they face, and how the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (“HEROES”) Act would make our state and nation healthier and safer.

Immigrants in California:
- Approximately 10.4 million people in California, including 3.1 million children, live in families with at least one noncitizen in the household.1
- 36% of California workers in frontline industries are immigrants, including about 33% of workers in the grocery, 33% of workers in health care, and 61% of workers in the building cleaning services industries.2

Barriers Accessing Essential Services for Testing and Treatment of COVID-19 for Immigrants in California:
- Because of the public charge regulation’s “chilling effect,” immigrant families, including many who are not subject to the public charge test, are avoiding public programs.3 About 6.8 million people in California could potentially be deterred from public programs because of immigration-related consequences.4
- Rapid job loss is leading to declines in employer-provided health insurance coverage,5 which in turn has increased need for publicly funded health care. If unemployment were to reach 17.5%, approximately 167,000 more noncitizens in low-income California households would be uninsured.6

Among Ways the HEROES Act Would Help Immigrants in California:
- Provides economic relief to approximately 2,228,350 children and adults in California households that filed taxes with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).7
- The direct economic impact of the inclusion of ITIN households in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (retroactively) and HEROES Act would be approximately $4,688,489,000.8 As recipients use these funds to pay rent and buy groceries, they will strengthen the California economy.

If you have questions or would like assistance creating your own state-specific version, please contact Renato Rocha at CLASP at rrocha@clasp.org or Sonya Schwartz, NILC consultant, at sonya@sonyaandpartners.com.

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2 A Basic Demographic Profile of Workers in Frontline Industries, A Basic Demographic Profile of Workers in Frontline Industries (Center for Economic and Policy, April 2020).
5 As of April 2020, the national unemployment rate stands at nearly 15 percent: https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf.
8 Ibid.