

New American Dreams Platform

The New American Dreams Platform seeks to identify and support administrative reforms to Arkansas education, workforce development and public safety policies that would foster immigrant integration and economic development.

ISSUES

- Health Equity - The disproportionate impact of COVID on vulnerable communities has exhibited fatal consequences for all of Arkansas. We now have the opportunity to correct to ensure that every Arkansan is vaccinated. The lack of state identification for vulnerable populations has posed a challenge in COVID testing, and will be a challenge for vaccination. Additionally, there are workplace issues for essential workers (often immigrants), poor social supports, and poor access to health care and information in other languages. Furthermore, decision making is often made by those outside the immigrant community.
- Eradication of English Only Law (education) - A.C.A. § 1-4-117 states that the English language shall be the official language of the State of Arkansas. This law has created a culture of English only through all state and local government, as a result, interpretation and translation of COVID info did not happen for over a month into the crisis. This impacted the surge in the immigrant community in June and July, when 70% of COVID deaths were in the Latinx and Marshallese communities. Demographic information on race & ethnicity were not collected until 6 weeks into the crisis, so it is likely that this percentage is larger. Additionally, the translations of the driver's test and manual has to be done with private funds, as in recent case with Marshallese (Springdale) and Vietnamese (Fort Smith).
- Eradicating interpretation limitations for elections - As asserted in a recent lawsuit against the state, this statute from 2007 is a direct violation of the Voting Act of 1965. Arkansas has been characterized as having the harshest interpretation restrictions of any state in the country. We have the opportunity to correct in state law before the courts do.
- Professional Licensure for DACA Recipients & other immigrants - DACA Nurses enabled more nurses to join the frontline in the fight of COVID. There is the opportunity to do the same for teachers (and substitute teachers) who are also in shortage right now due to COVID. Research suggests that one of the biggest indicators of success of a student is the race/ethnicity of their educator. DACA is safe and both Executive Action and legislative action are simultaneously being pursued that will allow our DREAMers to continue to have their work permits. Legislators have the opportunity to consider legal immigrants in other visa groups and in other licensure areas, due to restrictive citizenship requirements on professional licensure that are still on the books in Arkansas.

New American Dreams Platform

IMPACT

- DACA is safe for at least another four years. We have an opportunity to keep talented Arkansans at home.
- Providing DACA recipients with the proper licensure would ensure that Arkansas would grow its human capital to fill its critical state labor shortages of teachers, nurses and doctors.
- Changing the regulations about interpreters for elections would keep Arkansas from violating the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and ensure that every American would be able to fulfill their civic duty.

STANDING IN SOLIDARITY

We at Arkansas United are proud to support these issues that prioritize immigrants alongside other Arkansans, and we will dedicate time & resources to work on these issues

- Arkansas Trial Lawyers, National Employment Law Project and Annie Smith UArk Law Prof's Wage Theft Coalition
- Arkansas for Stronger Communities (Creating the Implied Warranty of Habitability, The Repeal of the Failure to Vacate Law, Amending the Unlawful Detainer Law, Creating a Simple, Fair Eviction Procedure for Nonpayment of Rent)
- Hates Crimes (support) and Stand Your Ground (oppose)
- Support to Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families agenda, especially Earned Income Tax Credit and renewal of Arkansas Works
- Protect Redistricting & Fair & Free Elections with Arkansas Counts

For more information about these legislative opportunities or to be connected to legislators who have already expressed interest contact:

- Mireya Reith, Founding Executive Director of Arkansas United: director@arkansasunited.org
- Sarai Portillo, Deputy Director: sarai@arkansasunited.org

REFERENCES

<https://law.justia.com/codes/arkansas/2015/title-1/chapter-4/section-1-4-117/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6948a2.htm>

<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=100>

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2019/09/12/474422/know-daca-recipients-state/>

<https://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/education/minority-teachers-students-same-race-research/>

