

COVID-19 Messaging Guide

APRIL 2020

The global public health and economic crisis caused by COVID-19 has shown us how interdependent and interconnected we are and how our collective well-being is reliant on all of us being safe, healthy, and able to thrive. It has also shone a spotlight on and amplified preexisting fractures in our society, especially the limited health and safety net, the dysfunctional immigration system that has marginalized millions of immigrants, and our economic and labor models that favor the few, all of which threaten our nation's safety, health, and collective well-being.

Low-income immigrants have been historically excluded by structural barriers, which means they are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Yet at the same time, immigrants are playing essential roles in confronting this pandemic — ranging from serving as first responders in the health care sector to harvesting and preparing our food and caring for our loved ones. Immigrants will be protagonists in our nation's recovery and will help us emerge from this crisis as a stronger and more resilient society.

NILC offers the following guidance to partners who are developing materials and talking to the media about this pivotal moment in our history and what it means for low-income immigrants and the future of our society.

GENERAL MESSAGING

In these difficult times, we are reminded of each other's shared humanity and that we are interdependent.

- Now more than ever, it is abundantly clear that our personal health and well-being are interdependent with our neighbors', coworkers', and society's at large.
- This virus does not discriminate — it does not care about race, class, or wealth. Our response to this crisis shouldn't either.
- Ensuring the health and well-being of immigrants — including access to testing, care, and treatment — will protect the health and well-being of us all.
- We must include everyone — including immigrants — as part of the solution to this public health crisis.
- We are the wealthiest nation on the planet. Everyone who calls this country home should be able to see a doctor when they need to and should be able to put food on their table. Anyone who loses their job because of the crisis also needs the economic relief to weather this storm.

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Immigrants are on the frontlines confronting this crisis and will help drive our country's recovery.

- Immigrants make up a significant percentage of people providing essential services during this pandemic. They are literally keeping our country running.
- Immigrants are working on the frontlines in health care, home care, food production, and agriculture; they are small business owners, delivery professionals, airport staff, grocery store employees, and more. Put simply, they are caring for our loved ones, healing the sick, and making sure we have food in our homes.
 - **Immigrant Workers: Vital to the U.S. COVID-19 Response, Disproportionately Vulnerable** (Migration Policy Institute)¹
 - **Farmworkers Face Coronavirus Risk: 'You can't pick strawberries over Zoom'** (Los Angeles Times)²
- As we envision what our society and structures look like post-COVID-19, we must recognize and include the role of immigrants in our recovery and create inclusive and equitable systems that ensure health care for all.

In times of crisis, systems and structures are tested, and we are seeing this in the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Where systems are strong, we become more resilient; where they are weak, they fracture even more.
- Fractures in our health, immigration, and economic systems are threatening our collective health, safety, and ability to thrive during this global pandemic.
- This is an opportunity for us to reimagine what society looks like post-COVID-19 and to create a vision for an inclusive and equitable society that takes care of everyone, immigrants included.

MESSAGING ABOUT POLICY AND SOLUTIONS

This virus doesn't discriminate; our policies to confront it shouldn't either.

- Policymakers must pass relief packages that include all our community members, regardless of where they were born.
- Immigrants are on the frontlines confronting this public health crisis: delivering groceries, harvesting produce for our meals, working in the health care sector, and caring for our loved ones. Immigrants will play a vital role in our economic recovery and must be included in any state and federal relief.
- This is not a time for partisanship but a time for courageous leaders to unite across party lines for our collective well-being and to ensure that we are all safe, healthy, and have the economic means not only to survive but to thrive.

¹ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-workers-us-covid-19-response>.

² <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-04-01/california-farmworkers-coronavirus>.

Divisive policies and anti-immigrant rhetoric only make this crisis worse.

- The fear that the Trump administration has fueled in immigrant communities from day one is putting us all at risk.
- Because of divisive policies such as public charge — Trump’s wealth test — many immigrants are afraid to seek the health care they need. This is shameful. No one in this country should get sick or die because they are afraid to get the health care they need.
- The Trump administration must suspend its public charge rule and worksite immigration enforcement activities, which jeopardize the lives of many.
- Trump is scapegoating immigrants to distract us from his failed leadership on COVID-19, which is endangering us all. By focusing on xenophobic rhetoric, Trump divides Americans and distracts us from his policies that prioritize corporate profits and the wealthy over the needs of working people of color in this country.

We need bold and visionary leadership to create inclusive and equitable solutions that recognize the role of immigrants as protagonists in our nation’s recovery and create opportunities for all to thrive.

- Just as immigrants are at the frontlines currently confronting this crisis, they will be key drivers in our nation’s recovery.
- Our leaders must create policy solutions that are inclusive and equitable, and that ensure that everyone — including immigrants — has access to health care, economic relief, and other supports that enable us all to thrive.
- The relief bills Congress passed are first steps, but they still leave too many people behind, including immigrants and low-income people. That’s unacceptable.
- We are all in this together. We need to ensure that everyone, including immigrants, can access health care and relief so we get through this together.

We envision a post–COVID-19 society where our government cares for all of us and policymakers prioritize our collective well-being over partisan politics. One in which everyone has access to supports and services that enable us to thrive, including:

- Pathways to citizenship for the millions of immigrants who are on the frontlines of confronting this virus and who will be key drivers of our nation’s recovery from this pandemic.
- A stronger safety net that allows people to take care of themselves and their families, and to be empowered to make choices that are healthy for them.
- Job security and access to unemployment insurance benefits.
- Paid sick leave for all workers.
- Workplace protections to ensure every worker’s health and safety.
- Medical care for all, regardless of immigration status.
- COVID-19 testing and health care that is free and accessible to anyone who needs it.
 - There should be no fee, no documentation required, and no threat of additional enforcement for anyone seeking care. All Americans depend on it.

- Suspension of the Trump administration’s harmful public charge rule, and a commitment that no one will be penalized for seeking assistance to support themselves and their family during this crisis.
 - This includes not only testing and care related to COVID-19, but also access to nutrition assistance, other health care, and access to funds and resources provided in any additional legislation passed by Congress and in the states.

NILC RESOURCES

- **Resources | COVID-19 Crisis and Consequences** ³
- **Understanding the Impact of Key Provisions of COVID-19 Relief Bills on Immigrant Communities** ⁴
- **NILC Statement on CARES Act** ⁵
- **Update on Access to Health Care for Immigrants and Their Families** ⁶
- **Letter to Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader Schumer Re. COVID-19 Legislation** ⁷
- **NILC Statement on the Coronavirus Immigrant Families Protection Act** ⁸

³ www.nilc.org/resources-covid19-crisis-and-consequences/.

⁴ www.nilc.org/impact-of-covid19-relief-bills-on-immigrant-communities/.

⁵ www.nilc.org/nilc-statement-regarding-2-trillion-covid-19-package/.

⁶ www.nilc.org/update-on-access-to-health-care-for-immigrants-and-their-families/.

⁷ www.nilc.org/letter-to-speaker-and-minority-leader-urging-fix-to-covid-relief-bill/.

⁸ www.nilc.org/coronavirus-immigrant-families-protection-act-introduced/.