



October 2020



Race to the Polls

Protect Immigrant Families

Immigrants come to the United States in search of a better life, to build a stronger future, and to achieve their dreams. Immigrants also make significant contributions to Wisconsin's communities and economy—contributions that are enhanced when immigrants have full access to opportunity. Most immigrants in Wisconsin are people of color, so protecting immigrant families requires Wisconsin lawmakers to stand up for racial justice.

The pandemic and recession have hit immigrants especially hard. Many immigrants hold essential jobs that are critical to keeping other community members safe and healthy. These front-line jobs — like keeping our food system running, taking care of people who are sick, and providing child care for people who are working — cannot be done from home. As a result, immigrants are at greater risk of being exposed to COVID-19.

Candidates running for public office in Wisconsin should be clear on where they stand on issues that affect our immigrant communities. Candidates should speak to how they plan to address the pandemic, make sure that Wisconsin residents can thrive regardless of their documentation status, and ensure immigrants can participate in community life without fear of being targeted. Specifically, we urge candidates to:

- **Take action to address the pandemic.** Lawmakers should take basic steps to require masks in public spaces, facilitate virtual learning for students, and compel employers to make sure workplaces are safe. These steps will slow the pandemic, save lives, and help keep immigrants and their families safe.
- **Keep families together.** Children belong with their parents. That is true whether the families arrive at the border fleeing economic hardship and violence, or live and work in Wisconsin's cities, small towns, and rural areas. Candidates should advocate for border policies that allow families to stay together when they seek asylum at the border, and block immigration enforcement from targeting law-abiding citizens. Candidates should also strengthen protections for young immigrants that allow them the opportunity to establish a secure future regardless of documentation status.
- **Remove barriers to driver licenses.** Immigrants are an important part of the Wisconsin workforce, but state law makes it harder for them to get to jobs because undocumented immigrants are not allowed to get driver licenses. Removing barriers to obtaining licenses would make Wisconsin highways safer, result in insurance savings from a broad pool of drivers, and help businesses connect with workers who have skill sets that match employer needs.

- **Allow families to access health care, food, and housing without fear of retaliation.** Parents shouldn't have to choose between keeping their families healthy and securing their future. Elected officials should oppose policies that would penalize immigrants seeking permanent residence (green cards) or those seeking to enter the country for their lawful use of public programs that help families function.
- **Allow more immigrants to receive urgent health care by expanding Emergency Services under BadgerCare.** Emergency services through BadgerCare allows non-US citizens who are otherwise eligible for BadgerCare to get coverage to treat serious, emergent health conditions. Wisconsin is perhaps the only state in the nation that restricts eligibility by denying this coverage to adults without dependent children when they are Medicaid eligible. Latinx Wisconsinites are uninsured at nearly five times the rate of Whites, and federal and state laws prohibit many immigrants from getting affordable insurance coverage. Emergency services is one of very few supports available to people regardless of their immigration status, and yet our state only provides this safety net to parents, pregnant women, and children. Wisconsin should align itself with other states and allow all otherwise eligible people to receive urgent medical care through emergency services. In order to help respond to the health crisis, Wisconsin should also clarify that COVID-19 treatment qualifies for emergency services under BadgerCare.