

## Immigration

*When immigrants are under attack, what do we do?*

The thunderous reply at rallies around the state has been: “stand up, fight back.” Governor Cuomo, the Assembly, and the Senate would do well to adopt a similarly bold attitude. At a time when the federal government seems intent on demonizing and deporting immigrants, state governments can make a big difference in defending American values.

New York has a lot at stake. Immigrants make up 23 percent of the state’s population, 27 percent of the state’s working-age population, and 25 percent of the state’s economic output. Immigrants are centrally important in New York City, where people born in another country make up more than one out of every three residents. But they are also playing a big role on Long Island and the Hudson Valley, where they make up 19 and 15 percent of local residents, respectively. And, in Northern and Western New York, immigrants often make the difference between overall population gain and population loss. Just six percent of residents in Northern and Western New York are foreign-born, but the immigrant and refugee population has been growing at a time when virtually every other demographic is shrinking or moving into retirement age. That means immigrants and refugees are critical to reversing population loss and driving a much-needed expansion of people in prime working age.<sup>75</sup>

Yet, New York has fallen substantially behind other states in protecting immigrant residents, fostering their educational and economic advancement, and in the process helping our local economies grow to their fullest potential.

If the governor and the legislature want to think big, they would do well to study the New York Immigration Coalition’s new *Blueprint for Immigrant New York*.<sup>76</sup> FPI was a participant in the process of developing the blueprint, and enthusiastically endorses its agenda. Below are immigration priorities, reflected in the blueprint, that FPI recommends should be addressed in this year’s budget.

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<sup>75</sup> Figures are based on FPI’s analysis of the 2015 American Community Survey.

<sup>76</sup> *Blueprint for Immigrant New York*, New York Immigration Coalition, November 2017, available at <http://www.thenyic.org/blueprint>.

## Education

### English Language Learners (ELL)

Immigrant children, Puerto Ricans, and U.S.-born children of immigrant parents often speak a language other than English at home. In the 2015-16 school year, there were 250,000 English Language Learners (ELL) in New York State schools, which was 8.8 percent of the total student population.<sup>77</sup>

English language programs are essential in helping students communicate with peers and others in the community and helps promote integration for the student and the whole family. Ultimately, strong English language skills also translate into far better job opportunities and greater contribution to the state's economy and tax base.

In recent years, schools around the state have also seen increases, sometimes suddenly, of ELLs. When the children are refugees, as is common in upstate New York schools, the challenge is multiplied by the large number of different languages spoken by the newcomers. Having the resources to be able to properly serve these students without having it be an undo strain on the school and its faculty is both a moral and a legal requirement.

The New York State Department of Education's mission statement includes the goal to "raise the knowledge, skill, and opportunity of all the people in New York." Doing that requires expanding the funding for English language programs in public schools. Advocates have proposed a \$100 million increase in funding to schools to help them address ELLs, which is well justified and much needed.

### Adult Literacy

New York's vibrant linguistic diversity is advantageous, but it also poses a challenge. Among immigrants living in New York State, 32 percent who have been here less than five years report speaking no or little English, a number that drops only to 27 percent for those who have been here over 10 years.<sup>78</sup> New York can do better than that. Around the state, there are long lists of people waiting to be able to take English language classes who can't get in. Investing in teaching English seems like an obvious benefit to the community and the local economy as well as to immigrants themselves.

Funding for Adult Literacy Education (ALE) has long been at a level that is far below the need. Last year \$7.3 million was allocated to ALE. This year the governor's executive budget cuts that by \$1 million which will reduce the total to an even more insufficient amount of \$6.3 million.

Both state and federal changes that shift the emphasis and priorities of funding to educating higher skilled immigrants will create challenges for ALE programs in obtaining the resources to educate

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<sup>77</sup> New York State Education Department ELL Demographics & Performance 2015-2016. See: [http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/ell\\_demographicperformance\\_2017-ver-1516.pdf](http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/ell_demographicperformance_2017-ver-1516.pdf)

<sup>78</sup> FPI analysis of ACS 2015.

lower-skilled immigrants who want to learn English to help them integrate. Program goals have shifted for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) system and the English Language and Civics program, so that their focus is now on post-secondary and workforce education. Added attention to these more advanced students is welcome, but it should not come at the cost of taking funding away from helping those with even greater needs. It is estimated that as some 17,000 lower-skilled students may no longer be able to benefit from these programs as a result of the shift to higher-skill students and the repurposing of \$8 million worth of WIOA funding in New York.<sup>79</sup> New York should increase the funding for Adult Literacy Education by \$8 million, to \$15.3 million to help address the gap.

### Excelsior Scholarships/Dream Act

Last year, Governor Cuomo introduced the idea of making public universities tuition-free for middle class students. The Excelsior Scholarships were enacted, ensuring that no one struggles to pay tuition. It was an ideal opportunity to include undocumented students, who had for years been pressing for the New York State Dream Act that would have helped them finance college. Instead, the governor and the legislature explicitly wrote Dreamers out of the Excelsior Scholarships. This is the year to fix that. New York is the third state with the largest undocumented population, however, it is also falling behind seven states and D.C. (California, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oklahoma Oregon, Texas and Washington) that already allow access to financial aid without regard to immigration status. Two other states allow undocumented students to apply for scholarships (Utah and Illinois).<sup>80</sup> New York allows undocumented students to pay the in-state tuition rates, however it excludes them from the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), that helps cover the costs. In 2012, FPI calculated the cost of the Dream Act to New York State if it were financed through an expansion of the personal income tax, which would cost the typical taxpayer 87 cents each year – less than the cost of replacing a lightbulb in the home once a year.<sup>81</sup> Both the Fiscal Policy Institute and the state comptroller estimated that the cost of the Dream Act would have been about \$20 million, a 2 percent increase to TAP expenditures.<sup>82</sup> While the cost is minimal, there is a very strong return on investment. The 76,000 Dreamers in New York currently contribute \$115 million in state and local taxes. As immigrant youth graduate from college, their earnings increase which translates into higher tax revenues, as well as provide skilled labor for the workforce. The median wage for an immigrant with only a high school degree is \$33,000. However, with a college degree, their wages almost double to \$62,000 and increase to \$80,000 with an advanced degree.<sup>83</sup>

Governor Cuomo put funding for the Dream Act in his executive budget. The Assembly has been supportive for years. In the Senate, the leader of the Independent Democratic Conference, Jeffrey D. Klein, has expressed his support for the measure. Given this level of support, it is hard to understand how the Dream Act has gone so many years without making it into the budget. It is time to set that right.

<sup>79</sup> New York State Education Department as referenced by Assembly Member Patricia Fahy and Assembly Member Ron Kim in a sign on letter to Hon. Carl Heastie, The Assembly State of New York, 2018.

<sup>80</sup> Maps: State Laws & Policies on Access to Higher Education for Immigrants. See:

<https://www.nilc.org/issues/education/eduaccess toolkit/eduaccess toolkit2/>

<sup>81</sup> “The New York State DREAM Act: A Preliminary Estimate of Costs and Benefits,” Fiscal Policy Institute, March 9, 2012.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid..

<sup>83</sup> FPI analysis of ACS 2015 1-year estimates.

## Health Care

Making sure immigrant communities are healthy is good for the people who get coverage, of course, but it's also good for their classmates, colleagues, and employers, all of whom benefit when the people they work and study with are healthy. As the governor noted in his Executive Budget, "An investment in young immigrants' futures is an investment in New York's future."<sup>84</sup>

## Child Health Plus

Governor Cuomo recently announced that recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy will continue to qualify for state-funded Medicaid and Child Health Plus (CHP) irrespective to a federal change or termination of the program. Of the 42,000 DACA recipients in the state, about 5,000 currently receive state-funded Medicaid. Continuing their coverage, irrespective of what happens to DACA in Washington, is the right thing to do. Now New York should go further.

Allocating \$83 million to raise the upper age limit of CHP from 18 to 29, would allow the state to offer quality subsidized health care coverage to undocumented and DACA young adults who are ineligible for Medicaid, Essential Plan, or Marketplace coverage due to their immigration status.<sup>85</sup> That's a well-grounded idea based on expansion of a program that has proven its value.

Extending the upper age limit of CHP from 18 to 29 is a deliberate effort to afford immigrant New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, with equivalent access to health insurance as other New Yorkers, who can be covered up to the age of 29 under New York's Insurance law permitting parents to keep their adult children on their job-based plans.<sup>86</sup> The Community Service Society estimates that of the 90,000 young adults who will become eligible for this program, 27,900 will sign up for CHP.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Governor Andrew Cuomo, FY 2018-2019 Executive Budget

<https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/archive/fy19/exec/fy19book/BriefingBook.pdf>

<sup>85</sup> Elisabeth R Benjamin, "How Can New York Provide Health Insurance Coverage to its Uninsured Immigrant Residents?: An Analysis of Three Coverage Options," (New York: Community Service Society, January 2016). Cost estimate has been adjusted for inflation since publication.

<sup>86</sup> On July 29, 2009, Governor David A. Paterson signed into law Chapter 240 of the Laws of 2009, which extends the availability of health insurance coverage to young adults through the age of 29. Available from:

[http://www.dfs.ny.gov/consumer/S6030\\_Age29.htm](http://www.dfs.ny.gov/consumer/S6030_Age29.htm)

<sup>87</sup> This estimate is based on a once-a-year open enrollment period (to reduce the risk of adverse selection) and lower take up rates for young adults compared to older adults

## Disproportionate Share Hospital Payments

SUNY Hospitals and Academic Health Centers are examples of institutions which serve the sickest and

most vulnerable patients and are at risk of collapsing. They are very important to many immigrant communities, as they are to other low- and moderate-income communities around the state. These SUNY hospitals depend on Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) payments which are reimbursements for the care and services they have already provided to patients who receive Medicaid and the uninsured. Although these reimbursements are supposed to come from the Department of Health, and are required by law, a new spending cap has put SUNY hospitals in the red and under great fiscal stress. These hospitals are vital institutions to the communities they serve and to the State of New York. They must continue to receive the financial support that they are entitled to by law.

## Equal Opportunity

### Driver's Licenses

Undocumented immigrants can currently apply for driver's licenses in 12 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. On this issue, New York is embarrassingly far behind the curve.

Driver's licenses are essential for taking kids to school, getting to doctor's appointments, shopping for everyday goods, and going to work. Yet today, for undocumented people the draconian penalty for driving without a license can be permanent separation from your family and deportation. For undocumented immigrants, a routine traffic stop can turn into a life-changing nightmare.

One day, the federal government will have to find some way to allow the 11 million undocumented immigrants who are already living in the United States—including 800,000 in New York State—to get right with the law. In the meantime, states can take the common-sense measure of making sure everyone on the road is tested, licensed, and insured.

FPI estimates that if the law changed, the revenues would easily outweigh the costs. Allowing all residents to apply for driver's licenses would bring in revenues in the form of driver's license fees, additional gasoline taxes, and sales tax on cars sold.

The total revenue to state and local governments, as well as transit authorities, would be \$57 million annually, plus an additional \$26 million in one-time revenue from fees. The revenues include \$28 million to New York State, \$21 million to county governments, \$8.6 million to MTA and \$288,000 to the upstate mass transit authorities.

Research on the issue has also shown that undocumented immigrants are particularly careful drivers today, but that they are safer drivers still in states that allow them to get driver's licenses.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> David Dyssegaard Kallick and Cyierra Roldan, "Expanding Access to Driver's Licenses: Inclusion of Immigrants Without Regard to Legal Status," (New York: Fiscal Policy Institute, 2016.) See footnote 7.

The fee charged for getting a license—typically \$64.25, making New York a relatively high-fee state—should be enough to cover any costs to the Department of Motor Vehicles. Still, it would be wise for the governor and legislature to allocate advance funding to the Department of Motor Vehicles to hire and train staff to prepare them for the higher demand. The change in law would be expected to generate revenue that would outweigh the initial start-up costs.

This would be life-changing for an estimated 265,000 undocumented immigrants around the state, including 4,500 in Albany, 3,000 in Rochester, 2,500 in Buffalo, and 1,000 in Syracuse metro areas; 51,000 on Long Island, 53,000 in the Hudson Valley, and 150,000 in New York City.

### Expansion of Executive Order 26 to Respond to Upstate Needs

New York State is well-known for its diversity and this can be seen in the range of languages spoken throughout the state—with 30 percent of New York residents speaking a language other than English at home.<sup>89</sup> In 2011, Governor Cuomo acknowledged the need for translated documents from state services and programs through executive order 26. However, translated information was limited to the six most common non-English languages statewide—Spanish, traditional Chinese, Russian, Haitian-Creole, Korean and Italian. This limited list of languages does not fully represent the translation needs and language diversity of New York State, and is particularly problematic in upstate New York, where refugees come from a very wide range of backgrounds.

Making this change would entail a miniscule budget cost, but would be a strong signal that the state government welcomes immigrants and recognizes the special challenges upstate areas face in addressing immigrant integration.

### Fairness in the Justice System

#### Liberty Defense Program

Last year, Governor Cuomo and the legislature put in place the Liberty Defense Program and allocated \$10 million to implement it. FPI applauds the effort, which was much needed. This year, the amount should be increased to \$20 million.

Ten million dollars is a woefully small amount to hope to cover the legal needs of immigrants in New York State. Even with New York City's legal services program covering a substantial portion, covering the remaining need requires far more than \$10 million.

The Safe Passage Project, which uses a private/public model similar to the Liberty Defense Programs, estimates the cost of one case at \$3,000 annually, and an average case takes two years, or \$6,000.<sup>90</sup> In FY 2016, there were 220,000 removal cases in New York State.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> FPI analysis of ACS 2016 5-year estimates.

<sup>90</sup> Safe Passage Project estimates provided in correspondence to the Fiscal Policy Institute by the executive director of the program, Richard Leimsider in 2016.

<sup>91</sup> Department of Justice FY 2016 Statistics Yearbook. See: <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/fysb16/download>

Governor Cuomo and the legislature should expand the funding for the Legal Defense Project to \$20 million, which would help 6,700 immigrants obtain legal representation for a year. Deportation can rip families apart and cause huge disruption in local communities. Providing legal representation is only a matter of fairness in making sure people are not unnecessarily deported or otherwise mistreated by the immigration system. Fair representation is the least we should expect for all New Yorkers.

## Economic Development

### Refugee Resettlement's Role in Upstate Urban Revitalization

In a state where 23 percent of residents are immigrants, nearly all aspects of immigrant integration could, in a sense, be considered economic development. Immigrants are helping expand and diversify the state's labor force. Helping immigrants do better is also a way of helping the overall economy expand. Education, health care, access to services are all part of helping boost the well-being and productive capacity of the community.

The case is special, however, in the cities of upstate New York. Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, Utica, Binghamton and other upstate cities have followed a similar pattern of population decline over the past several decades. All are at a point where the population seems to be stabilizing, and in some cases even growing again. In all cases, immigrants and refugees are an important part of that story. That's no surprise: around the country, the only cities that have seen a population rebound are cities where immigrants have been a substantial part of that picture.

Upstate cities have a long and strong tradition of refugee resettlement, with refugees making up many, and in some areas even most, of the immigrants. Within New York State, while downstate areas have far more immigrants in general, nearly all of the refugee placement is in upstate New York, where housing is less expensive and there are institutions well prepared to help them get started. Indeed, over 92 percent of all refugees placed in New York over the past 10 years were placed in either Northern and Western New York (83 percent) or in the Hudson Valley (9 percent); the large majority in the Hudson Valley were placed in Albany county.

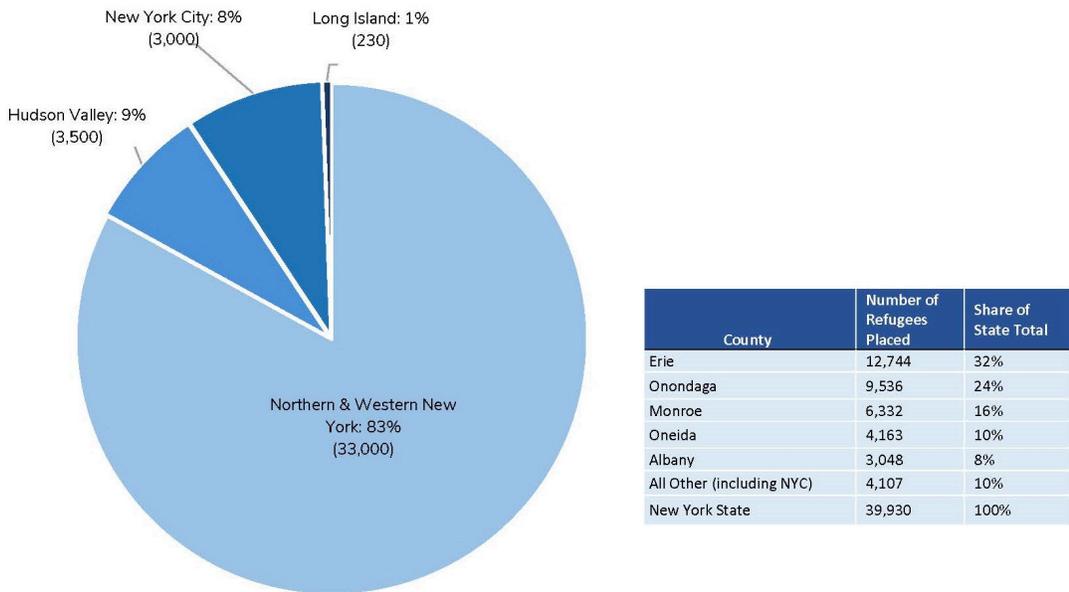
Last year, the state budget included \$2 million to help refugee resettlement agencies address a sudden shortfall in funding resulting from the Trump Administration's travel ban and reduction in refugee numbers. This provided critical support to anchor institutions in cities across upstate, allowing them to provide extended integration services to refugees who are already here, and helping them retain skilled staff and institutional capacity.

This year, it would make sense to double that funding, to \$4 million. Agencies are even more stressed than last year, with reductions in refugee resettlement squeezing institutions that have had decades-long federal funding and built up a very strong capacity. Four million dollars is a small amount in the context of the state budget, but a real help to refugees and to upstate urban economic development. Even this small amount of money spread across institutions in a number of cities is genuinely important in keeping resettlement agencies open, helping keep buildings activated that might otherwise have become abandoned and put a downward drag on already stressed neighborhoods. This state money has the benefit of being more flexible than the federal funding the agencies receive, and can be designed to allow the resettlement agencies to help refugees beyond their first 90 days in the country, can help them to be prepared for higher-skilled jobs, or learn better English, for example. It could also help refugees moving to places like Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany,

or Utica who were first settled in other parts of the United States. And it could be used for people not formally designated as refugees but who meet many of the same conditions, such as people fleeing Puerto Rico. Receiving these people in upstate cities and helping them get their feet on the ground to contribute to the local economy is a great way to help them and help the cities’ revitalization at the same time.

FPI roundly applauds the governor for including in the executive budget includes \$1.5 million for Utica’s One World Welcome and Opportunity Center. The center is an excellent way to leverage the longstanding tradition of refugee resettlement, and to anchor downtown revitalization. As the Buffalo News recently noted in an editorial, similar center would make sense in all of upstate New York’s cities, all of which have strong traditions of refugee resettlement that could be put to use in attracting and settling both refugees and others in areas that would benefit from population growth.<sup>92</sup>

Fig 24. Upstate New York Is the State’s Main Location for Refugee Resettlement



Source: FPI analysis of data from WRAPS, 2008 to 2017.

### Professional Licensing

Across New York State there are taxi cab drivers, dishwashers, and home care aides who were once doctors, teachers, and engineers before being settled or coming to the United States. It is sadly common for immigrants who received a foreign degree to accept a low wage position, a phenomenon often termed “brain waste.” when they could be working in much more productive jobs with only small changes in the state’s licensing systems. This “brain waste,” prevents immigrants from receiving the wages they worked hard for, and the workforce loses skilled individuals for positions that need to be filled.

<sup>92</sup> “Editorial: Buffalo Relies on Immigration,” Buffalo News, February 3, 2018.

Almost half (47 percent) of the foreign-born population has at least some college.<sup>93</sup> Immigrant college graduates who are working in low-wage positions are losing a cumulative \$5 billion in wages compared to what they would make if their skills were fully engaged.<sup>94</sup> Brain waste is not only detrimental to the immigrants, but the economy as well. And, when people’s wages are higher they also pay more in taxes. Brain waste prevented the New York economy from receiving an additional \$594 million in local and state tax revenue.<sup>95</sup>

The state budget should add funding to community colleges, non-profit organizations and public institutions to help re-credential immigrants who qualify. There are well established models for this, and organizations that work exactly in this area—for example Upwardly Global and World Education Services—as well as other states that can provide models for moving forward.

## Expansion of resources and guidance

### Civic Engagement 2020 Census

Recently the governor of California proposed to invest \$40.3 million to implement a census outreach program to guarantee that attempts to discourage participation and defund the census do not impact receiving a statistically sound count of the number of Californians in the 2020 census.<sup>96</sup> Governor Cuomo and the New York State legislature should make a similar investment in ensuring that New Yorkers are fully enumerated in 2020.

It is crucial that New York State receives an accurate count of its residents. The economic, social, and demographic statistics produced by the population survey influences business, city planning, and policy decisions at every level of government. Furthermore, the information collected in the census survey is used to determine electoral representation in the U.S. House of Representatives, to realign boundaries of legislative districts, and to allocate billions of dollars in federal aid to state and local programs.

Since 1790 the decennial population survey has collected vital information about the residents of our nation, as is mandated in the Constitution. Today, the data gathered by the U.S. Department of Commerce through the U.S. Census Bureau is essential to policymakers, business leaders, the media, academics, and the general public: it’s an important part of how we understand who we are and how we’re doing. Each year the Census Bureau collects survey data, but it is in the decennial census that the data are recalibrated to a full population count. And it is the decennial census that is the basis for apportionment of seats in congress. Getting this right is of the utmost importance.

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<sup>93</sup> Population is restricted to 25 years or older. FPI analysis of 2016 ACS 5-year estimates data.

<sup>94</sup> Ariel G. Ruiz Soto, Jeanne Batalova, and Michael Fix, “The Costs of Brain Waste Among Highly Skilled Immigrants in New York State, Migration Policy Institute, 2016. The Migration Policy Institute was, to our knowledge, the first to coin the term “Brain Waste.”

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> State of California Governor Brown, Governor’s Budget Summary 2018-2019, Available from: <http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2018-19/pdf/BudgetSummary/FullBudgetSummary.pdf>

The decennial census always requires preparation, and the state and local governments can do a great deal to ensure that the census goes well, from helping identify dwellings to engaging nongovernment organizations in outreach. The 2020 Census promises to be a far greater challenge, potentially even a battleground. Last year the U.S. Government Accountability Office added the 2020 Census to its list of federal programs at “high risk” of failure. And, in May 2017, John Thompson, Director of the Census Bureau and 27-year veteran of the agency, resigned over a congressional budget forecast that he found to be inadequate to carry out the 2020 census.<sup>97</sup>

The Trump Administration is also taking actions that could significantly lower participation by immigrants. For example, on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 the U.S. Department of Justice requested that the Census Bureau add the question of citizenship on the 2020 Census questionnaire.<sup>98</sup> Although the Census Bureau is legally required to keep the data that it collects confidential, it is always challenging to convince the public, particularly immigrants, to fully participate in the survey. In New York State, where 4.5 million immigrants represent 23 percent of the population, reducing participation in the census by a few percentage points could mean loss of a congressional seat, loss of federal funding, and more.<sup>99</sup>

At the Fiscal Policy Institute, we work with census data every single day. We know the tremendous work the Census Bureau has done over many, many decades. Every decade media and political leaders in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany wait for the Census with baited breath to see whether this might be the year their populations begin to rebound. Business owners and real estate businesses turn to the census for reliable data about trends in market size. School districts look to the census to project future school building needs. And federal funding and representation in congress is at stake. California’s proposed \$40 million investment would be \$20 million in New York, adjusting based on population size (39.3 million in California, 19.7 million in New York). The governor and the legislature should be able to agree on at least that much: A state investment in making sure the count is right is a bipartisan issue that has broad benefits to multiple sectors around the state.

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<sup>97</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, [https://www.gao.gov/highrisk/2020\\_decennial\\_census/why\\_did\\_study](https://www.gao.gov/highrisk/2020_decennial_census/why_did_study)

U.S. Census director resigns amid turmoil over funding of 2020 count, Washington Post, Available from: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/us-census-director-resigns-amid-turmoil-over-funding-of-2020-count/2017/05/09/8f8657c6-34ea-11e7-b412-62beef8121f7\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.e0ebda657eb7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/us-census-director-resigns-amid-turmoil-over-funding-of-2020-count/2017/05/09/8f8657c6-34ea-11e7-b412-62beef8121f7_story.html?utm_term=.e0ebda657eb7)

<sup>98</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, citing the need for "a reliable calculation of the citizen voting age population" and "protecting all American citizen's voting rights" <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4340651-Text-of-Dec-2017-DOJ-letter-to-Census.html>

<sup>99</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Available from: [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_16\\_5YR\\_S2701&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_5YR_S2701&prodType=table)

## A Shared Opportunity Agenda

The Trump Administration's tax law, looming federal budget cuts, multi-billion-dollar state budget deficits, glaring unmet human and physical infrastructure needs throughout the state...this year's New York State budget negotiations are taking shape against a worrisome and uncertain backdrop. The president and congress are threatening to dismantle decades-old federal entitlement programs, make drastic cuts to programs that help millions of struggling New Yorkers, and create a hostile environment for the state's four and a half million immigrants. The state has an important role to play to help make life better for all New Yorkers—and we must provide protections to our residents even if the federal government won't.

The Shared Opportunity section lays out recommendations for policy changes that we believe will improve the lives of struggling New Yorkers and begin to address the glaring racial, gender, and income inequality that exists in our state.

### Reduce Income Inequality and Help Those Living in Poverty

- **Increase the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**

The state EITC is currently set at 30 percent of the federal EITC. Increasing the state EITC to 40 percent would help lift many hard-working families out of poverty. State EITC benefits should also be expanded to aid childless workers ages 20-24 and those 65-66, and to increase amounts for childless couples. We should also look to expand the credit to provide benefits to those not currently covered including the unemployed, immigrants, and seniors.

- **Decouple from the Federal Child Tax Credit and Expand the State Child Tax Credit**

The new federal tax law makes significant changes to the child tax credit (CTC) both by increasing the maximum credit to \$2,000 and making it available to singles with incomes under \$200,000 and couples with incomes under \$400,000. This move increases the measure's cost while reducing its progressivity as more families with higher incomes are able to claim the credit intended to help low-income families with children. Additionally, since the state CTC is linked to current federal tax law, New York's revenues will suffer considerably as a result of a higher number of claims from higher income individuals (estimated to cost \$500 million annually). It would be reasonable to decouple from the federal law in this instance and provide an enhanced version of the state-based child credit for low-income families along with changing the age of eligible children to include children under the age of four.