

# Understanding Immigrant Rights

## The Role of Communities in Upholding Them

### Does the Constitution apply to undocumented immigrants?

Many provisions in the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights refer to “people” or “person,” instead of “citizen.” Therefore, the fundamental constitutional protections of due process and equal protection apply to everybody in the United States, regardless of status.

### Immigrant Rights, regardless of legal status, include:

- ◆ The right to be paid for their work at minimum wage
- ◆ The right to a driver’s license in certain states, including Connecticut
- ◆ The right to due process, which often but not always includes the right to a hearing before an Immigration Judge
- ◆ The right to representation by a lawyer in immigration court at no cost to the government, except special cases such as “expedited removal” established by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996
- ◆ Immigrants contribute to academia; foreign-born scientists make up nearly half (49%) of mid-level positions, known as postdocs, at U.S. research universities

### Ways to uphold immigrant rights:

- ◆ Understand, seek to learn more, & spread awareness of immigrant rights
- ◆ Volunteer with local organizations supporting the immigrant community, visit [www.building1community.org/engage](http://www.building1community.org/engage) for volunteer opportunities
- ◆ Contact elected officials to convey your support for comprehensive immigration reform

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### Contributions made by immigrants:

- ◆ Immigrants make up a significant part of the workforce; in Connecticut, one in six workers is an immigrant and only 7% of undocumented immigrants in the state are unemployed
- ◆ Immigrants create businesses and jobs. Immigrants are more likely to start a small business than a native-born America
- ◆ Immigrants pay taxes and social security, although not all are eligible for benefits; the IRS estimates that undocumented immigrants pay over \$9 billion annually in withheld payroll taxes

### B1C Immigration Legal Services

Legal services are available at **B1C** through a team of trained assistants led by Immigration Attorney Adriana Podesta. Assistance includes citizenship, green card renewals, family petitions, VAWA, U-Visa, and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Walk-in consultations are available on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 am to 4 pm. For more information, call 203-674-8585 ext. 109.

### Sources

U.S. Department of Labor, American Civil Liberties Union, American Immigration Council, Migration Policy Institute, Small Business Administration, Internal Revenue Service, Social Security Administration, Bipartisan Policy Center, National Science Foundation.



The Center for Immigrant Opportunity

[www.Building1Community.org](http://www.Building1Community.org)