



## ADVOCATING AND INVESTING IN EQUITY FOR IMMIGRANT FAMILIES MAY 5, 2020

### WHY?

Twenty-five percent of children under six have a parent who is an immigrant and the overwhelming majority of those children are U.S. citizens. Twenty percent of the people who provide early learning services are themselves immigrants. Immigrant families often experience inequity because they have less access to safe work, fair and steady pay, prenatal care, maternity leave and other basic opportunities to strengthen families. As a result, children of immigrants represent a disproportionate share of children living in poverty.

The Coronavirus pandemic adds to these health and economic **disparities**. For example, immigrants represent a large share of frontline workers responding to the pandemic (e.g., home health aides, grocery store cashiers, pharmacy clerks), yet they are half as likely to have health insurance. Similarly, immigrants – many of them parents - were over-represented in industries hardest hit by the pandemic (e.g., hotels, restaurants, cleaning services, childcare and nail and hair salons) and many are now experiencing mass layoffs. Many immigrants, including some with permanent residency also known as green cards, do not qualify for safety-net programs like food stamps and key parts of the federal relief bills exclude mixed-status households and other immigrant families from some forms of relief, making private action more crucial.

### WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN?

**Advocacy for equity and immigrant families' access to resources.** Advocates can influence policymakers and legislators by drawing attention to rules that create inequity for children of immigrants and their parents. For example, through advocacy immigrant families can have greater access to prenatal care and other important health care services as lawmakers direct more funding to community health centers which treats patients regardless of immigration status or as states opt to use federal matching funds to make prenatal care coverage available through Medicaid or CHIP.

**Investment in disaster relief assistance for children of immigrants.** Since both safety-net programs that predated the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., cash assistance, food stamps) and many provisions within the relief legislation (e.g., tax rebatement payments, expanded unemployment insurance) exclude certain immigrant groups, some state and local governments have established their own pandemic relief funds. While each state or local disaster relief assistance program is uniquely designed, money from these funds generally go to families as direct payments to help with rent, food, and other basic needs. Supporting these funds can help stabilize immigrant families in crisis from the economic fallout of the pandemic.

**Outreach, education, and case management.** Immigrant-serving organizations are uniquely positioned to help immigrant families navigate the policy maze of available benefits, services, eligibility rules and application processes. Given the economic consequences of the pandemic, many of these organizations are in desperate need of financial support to continue operations. They need financial support to deliver outreach, education, and case management services to immigrant families, including tele human services.

## OPPORTUNITIES:

**National Advocacy – The Children Thrive Action Network** is a national network aimed at protecting and supporting children in immigrant families. The Network brings together advocates and service providers at the national, state, and local levels to ensure children of immigrants have access to good nutrition; regular health care; healthy living environment; high-quality education and childcare; economic security; and stable, nurturing caregivers. To learn more about the Children Thrive Action Network and how to advocate for immigrant families, contact Wendy Cervantes, Director of Immigration and Immigrant Families, CLASP at [wcervantes@clasp.org](mailto:wcervantes@clasp.org).

**State Advocacy** – Children’s advocates at the state level can collaborate with immigration, civil rights, and other advocates to improve children’s access to benefits and to improve their lives by ensuring that parents have income and family support. This [report](#) provides a good example of how state rules on immigration-related issues, such as drivers’ licenses and sanctuary policies, can impact children’s health and wellbeing. To learn more about the policies that impact immigrant families in your state, visit the [State Immigration Policy Resource](#). You may also be able to identify potential advocacy partners in your state by contacting organizations that are affiliated with the [Partnership for America’s Children](#) or the [Alliance for Early Success](#).

**State and Local Disaster Relief Programs** - Recognizing that many immigrant families have been hit hardest by the pandemic and have no safety net or relief assistance to fall back on, some states and nonprofit organizations have partnered with the private sector, philanthropy and community members to establish assistance programs for those left out of the federal help. In partnership with [Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees](#) and other philanthropic organizations, California established a the [California Immigrant Resilience Fund](#), a disaster relief fund to support unauthorized immigrants in the state. Washington state formed a similar disaster cash assistance program. For more information about that, read the [news release](#) or contact Norah West at [norah.west@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:norah.west@dshs.wa.gov). The National Domestic Workers Alliance created a [special fund](#) designed to help home care workers, nannies and house cleaners facing financial hardships because of COVID-19. To support this or other local funds, visit this directory of [Coronavirus Care Funds](#).

**Support to Immigrant-Serving Organizations** - Like many small businesses, nonprofit organizations need support to remain solvent and continue serving immigrant families. Some foundations developed new funds or modified existing grant programs to support vulnerable families, including those with limited English proficiency. The Seattle Foundation partnered with business, government, and philanthropic groups to deploy rapid response grants to organizations serving at the frontlines of the COVID-19 response. To support these efforts, contact Kris Hermanns, Chief Impact Officer, Seattle Foundation at [k.hermanns@seattlefoundation.org](mailto:k.hermanns@seattlefoundation.org). Other ways to support immigrant serving organizations include reaching out to national networks with hundreds of local affiliates including [refugee resettlement agencies](#) and other members of the [Refugee Council USA](#) or [UNIDOS US](#), which has a network of over 300 affiliates.

## More Information:

- ECFC’s [COVID-19 Resources for EC Funders](#) for guiding principles, emerging areas of need and investment opportunities related to early childhood.
- GCIR’s [COVID-19 Resources](#) on the impact of the pandemic on immigrant communities and the philanthropic response.

