

The Latino Community Fund Georgia Fully Supports Expanding Entrepreneur Opportunities to All Georgians

From the beginning, people have come into the country with the hope of being part of the exemplary American experiment--one that values innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit. These courageous individuals have driven our economy and country forward. Georgia could fully honor this spirit of American entrepreneurship and make itself a more formidable economic powerhouse by eliminating barriers inhibiting some from making valuable contributions to the nation. Currently, state policies prevent individuals with limited documentation from transforming their talents, drive, and ingenuity into businesses and profit.¹ These homegrown businesses have been at the core of our communities, fostering self-sufficiency, employment, generating local dollars, and helping make the state more attractive to investment.

As many as 1.1 million non-citizens run a business in the United States.² They are either part or full owners of up to 14% of private businesses in the sectors of retail, construction, education, social services, and hospitality; these commercial endeavors are generating \$800 billion annually.³ Georgia could carve itself a share of these substantial numbers by eliminating unnecessary barriers. As it stands, in 2016 undocumented immigrants generated \$757 million in revenue despite the hurdles in obtaining business licenses, loans, and other public benefits.⁴ Allowing free enterprise to thrive, this number would surely increase.

New businesses in our country, and especially small businesses, are in decline; for the first time on record, business deaths outpaced business births.⁵ There is an opportunity for Georgia to lead in reversing this trend, cut the red tape, and strengthen our state's economy by allowing entrepreneurs to flourish. This would increase employment, decrease a reliance on social programs, and increase tax dollars that would help improve the lives of all Georgians.⁶

According to the 2018 Georgia Latino Entrepreneurship Study by the Latino Community Fund Georgia, 78% of top-earning, Latino entrepreneurs found the greatest barrier against growth was navigating, understanding, and operating within the legal, political, and regulatory environment; in other words, current policies are stifling prosperity for new Americans.⁷ These are individuals that in spite of the barriers are already generating profit, paying taxes, creating opportunities, and helping meet the needs of their local communities.

We believe it is time to implement common sense reforms that support American drive and innovation. It's time to remind everyone that Georgia continues to be the best place for all business and entrepreneurs.

1 O.C.G.A § 50-36-1 (2009)

2 Gisela Salomon and Claudia Torrens, "Tensions Rise Among Undocumented Business Owners in the US," *INC.*, August 17, 2017, www.inc.com/associated-press/business-owners-without-legal-status-us-selling-business.html.

3 Jessica Stillman, "Immigrants' Big Role in Small Business," *INC.*, www.inc.com/jessica-stillman/immigrants-play-an-outsize-role-in-small-business.html.

4 "Undocumented Immigrants," *New American Economy*, December 30, 2019, www.newamericaneconomy.org/issues/undocumented-immigrants/.

5 "Dynamism in Retreat: Consequences for Regions, Markets, and Workers," *Economic Innovation Group*, February 2017, www.eig.org/dynamism.

6 Fernanda Uriegas, "Undocumented Entrepreneurs Rise Above Policy Making," *Forbes*, May 12, 2018, www.forbes.com/sites/fernandafabian/2018/05/12/undocumented-entrepreneurs-rise-above-policy-making/#3261d7f34ee4.

7 "2018 Georgia Latino Entrepreneurship Study," *Latino Community Fund Georgia*, April 24, 2019, bit.ly/2018GLER-1.