

# Immigration Legal Services: Are An Investment in California's Economy

**Investing in legal services makes California stronger!** This includes economic growth, family unity and community resilience, and a strong foundation for the future of our state. The lack of legal representation results in a loss of wages, economic activity, and tax revenue that could benefit all Californians. Investing in legal services is the smart investment for a state that is home to more immigrants than any other state in the union.

For example, the Colorado Fiscal Institute (CFI) estimated "that from FY 2021-2023, the collective cost of **lost labor income** to immigrants detained in the course of their case is about **\$10 million**. Furthermore, CFI estimates that across those three years, Colorado's state and local economies lost out on over \$15.8 million in economic activity, and state and local governments missed out on more than \$894,000 in taxes.<sup>1</sup>

California, like many other states, is anticipated to face significant demographic challenges, including an aging workforce, declining birth rates, and labor shortages in key industries such as healthcare, agriculture, and technology. Pro-immigrant policies help address these issues by expanding the labor force, increasing tax revenues, and ensuring a strong workforce in essential sectors.

## Research consistently shows that investing in immigration legal services yields significant economic benefits, often generating returns that surpass initial costs:

<p>For every \$1 spent on immigration legal services, Oregon realized <b>\$4.94</b> in financial benefits.</p> <p>Source: <a href="#">Oregon Law Foundation</a></p>	<p>Asylum seekers residing in New York City shelters could collectively earn <b>over \$470 million</b>, contributing to the local economy and tax base.</p> <p>Source: <a href="#">NYC Comptroller</a></p>	<p>A 2017 study estimated that eliminating Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) could result in a <b>\$433 billion reduction in U.S. GDP</b> over a decade.</p> <p>Source: <a href="#">Center for American Progress</a></p>
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**If California were to provide legal services for up to 25,000 people, the estimated economic benefits could range between approximately \$117.5 million and \$617.5 million.** This estimate is based on findings that show each dollar spent on immigration legal services generates significant returns, including increased earnings, higher tax contributions, and reduced reliance on public assistance.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.coloradofiscal.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2024\\_Legal-Defense-Fund-PDF.pdf](https://www.coloradofiscal.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2024_Legal-Defense-Fund-PDF.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The estimated economic benefit range was derived using data from multiple studies that analyzed the financial returns of investing in immigration legal services. First, we applied findings from a study showing that each dollar spent on legal services generates approximately \$4.94 in economic benefits. By estimating legal service costs per person between \$1,500 and \$5,000, we calculated a potential return for serving 25,000 individuals. Additionally, we referenced another study that quantified the earnings potential of immigrants receiving legal support, using a per-person benefit estimate to project total economic impact. The final range reflects both direct financial returns and broader economic contributions, ensuring a comprehensive estimate.

# Immigration Legal Services: Strengthen Education & Social Stability in California

**Investing in legal services ensures that California's students have the resources they need to thrive!** Access to immigration legal services is essential for ensuring that students in California can complete their education, contribute to the workforce, and support social stability in their communities. **These investments are not only for immigrant students, but many are available to the families of students who are citizens, green card holders, or visa holders.**

The **California State University (CSU)** system plays a pivotal role in promoting economic mobility for low- and moderate-income students. Recent analyses highlight CSU campuses as leaders in elevating students' socioeconomic status post-graduation. As of recent estimates, the California State University (CSU) system enrolls approximately 9,500 undocumented students across its 23 campuses.

California currently funds legal services at CSU's through the **California State University Immigration Legal Services Project (CSU-ILSP)** ensuring that students and their families have access to quality legal services. **These investments can have generational impacts for families, allowing them a pathway to residency and economic stability.** California also supports programs like the **Children's Holistic Immigration Representation Project (CHIRP)** which provides legal support to unaccompanied immigrant youth, and also wrap-around assistance from social workers to ensure youth have access to essential services, and the guidance and resources they need to overcome barriers to enroll and stay in school.

<p>Research shows that undocumented students with access to legal assistance have <b>higher retention and graduation rates</b>, which leads to increased lifetime earnings and economic contributions</p> <p>Source: <a href="#">TheDream.US, 2021</a></p>	<p>Legal status and educational attainment contribute to lower poverty rates among undocumented immigrants. A 2018 study in the Journal of Public Economics found that DACA <b>reduced the likelihood of living in poverty by 38%</b></p> <p>Source: <a href="#">Can Authorization Reduce Poverty among Undocumented Immigrants?</a></p>	<p>Students facing immigration challenges experience <b>higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression</b>, which negatively impact academic performance and retention. <b>Providing legal relief allows them to focus on their studies</b> without the burden of uncertainty, improving their GPAs and career prospects</p> <p>Source: <a href="#">American Psychological Association, 2021</a></p>
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**Investing in immigration legal services is an investment in California's future. Programs like CSU-ILSP and CHIRP ensure that thousands of students can complete their education, secure stable jobs, and contribute to their communities. By expanding access to these services, California strengthens its economy, promotes social stability, and upholds its commitment to educational equity.**

# Immigration Legal Services: Make California Communities Safer

**Investing in legal services makes California safer!** Providing immigrant communities access to legal resources can not only protect people's rights, it can improve cooperation with local law enforcement and make communities safer for everyone.

Various studies have shown that providing individuals access to legal services not only benefits them and their family unit, but can have positive outcomes for their community. Cities that provide free or low-cost legal assistance to immigrants facing deportation, such as through the **SAFE (Safety and Fairness for Everyone) Initiative**, have seen **lower crime rates and stronger community-police relations**.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, a study examining the impact of immigration status on crime reporting found that Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) eligibility increased victims' likelihood of reporting crimes to the police. This suggests that legal protections like DACA may reduce victims' fear of interacting with law enforcement, potentially leading to more accurate crime reporting and enhanced public safety.<sup>2</sup>

When immigrants have access to legal representation and know their rights, they are more likely to report crimes and cooperate with police without fear of deportation.

<p>A 2017 study published in the <i>Journal of Economic Behavior &amp; Organization</i>, found that providing immigrants with legal protections (such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA) <b>correlated with lower crime rates</b>.</p> <p>Source: <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0049089X22000497">Journal of Economic Behavior &amp; Organization</a></p>	<p>Another study from the <i>Journal of Public Economics</i> found that cities with pro-immigrant policies, including legal services, <b>experience lower violent crime rates</b> than those with more restrictive policies.</p> <p>Source: <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0049089X22000497">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0049089X22000497</a></p>	<p>Access to legal services helps immigrants obtain legal work authorization, increasing employment and economic stability. Research consistently links economic security to <b>lower crime rates</b>.</p> <p>Source: <a href="#">NYC Comptroller Report</a></p>
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**Studies suggest that providing immigrants with access to legal services, ensuring due process, and maintaining a clear separation between local law enforcement and federal immigration enforcement can enhance trust and cooperation within communities, thereby contributing to overall public safety.**

<sup>1</sup><https://www.vera.org/ending-mass-incarceration/reducing-incarceration/detention-of-immigrants/advancing-universal-representation-initiative/safe-network#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20SAFE%20Network,they%20receive%20a%20fair%20trial>  
<sup>2</sup> <https://experts.syr.edu/en/publications/the-impact-of-immigration-status-on-crime-reporting-evidence-from>