NEBRASKA ALLIANCE FOR THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Positive immigration solutions for strong Nebraska communities, families and workforce.

Examples of local impact (of outdated immigration laws)

According to Nebraskans across communities and across sectors, these are a few of the local impacts of harmfully outdated immigration laws (themes). See direct descriptions from conversations farther below.

- **Extreme workforce strain** – not only for core jobs but throughout related support systems.
- **Constant instability & uncertainty** for families, employers, and whole communities.
- **Worrisome impacts on rural and urban community life,** including an inability to provide everyday services that both urban and rural communities need to thrive.

Communities & Families Examples

- Joseline (Dreamer Nebraskan - Grand Island)
- Cleofes (Temporary Protected Status - Wakefield/Omaha)
- Geraldine (family separation - Columbus)
- Monica (Dreamer Nebraskan - Columbus)

Nebraska Hospitality Association (largest collective employer in the state)

- "Restaurants and grocery stores are closing and reducing hours, closing because they don't have people to work. *Some* restaurants opening and closing is normal, but this is something different. Now they don't have the people to stay open."
- "This has a direct impact on town livability. Without restaurants & social spaces, that changes places. Do young people want to be here? It also impacts elderly meals and social isolation. People don't want to stay. Parents go with the kids & the money goes with them. Without grocery stores, if you need to drive to the next town, then young & old start to decide to move away."
- Broader economic impact: lost revenues of sales tax and occupation taxes affect Nebraska cities and state (hospitality industry is the largest collector and remitter of taxes in the state).

Nebraska Cattlemen

- "The aging demographic is clear in this industry – the average age for Cattlemen is 57.5 or older. We need people for all sectors of the industry: feedlots, driving trucks, feeding cattle, harvest, also for supplies that go into the operation and the delivery pipeline."
- "Everything is tied together. We need people not just for the industry work, but for the rest of community life. Without more people and families, even if you manage to run the business for a while longer, we're losing community. Take for example the comments from local communities: the local grocery store is closing, they're struggling to find teachers for the schools, to sustain the town. You're driving farther for your groceries and health care. Rural areas are becoming remote areas."
- "Cattlemen see this [immigrant community members] as part of our family."

Nebraska Pork Producers

- "We're always short of people – feed mills, trucks, maintenance crews. The biggest need is not going away. It's easy to prove there are not enough people locally."
- "We need immigrants like the Dreamers and everyone else we can get. Our farmers do not understand why we are turning people away at the border. We see people seeking safety at the border, and we need people to help do the work. Can't we find a legal way to make this work?"
- "The impact [of outdated immigration laws] will continue to grow. Without the livestock businesses being good and healthy, other ag businesses suffer too."

Nebraska State Dairy Association

- [Background: Urgent need for people on a long-term basis – urgency b/c cows need to be milked 2-3 times a day, no exceptions. You can't take a day off or it will turn into an animal health problem. So any workforce gaps create serious and immediate pressures.]
- "There's not a dairy farm or livestock producer who hasn't struggled with sufficient staffing. One farmer I talked to had worked 48 hours with only a couple hours sleep because he was short staffed. I've heard livestock producers say things like, 'If something doesn't get fixed, we'll be met with a bleak ultimatum.' The path we are on now isn't sustainable, every industry is in the same position."
- "We urgently need people on dairy farms – and that's just the direct need. That's not counting the surrounding systems to get product to market, feed to the cows, build and repair buildings, transport, bottle, etc."
- "I have taken a call from a producer who said, 'My herdsman just got deported. He has a wife and 3 kids who live in the nearby town and are all citizens.' People start as employees on our farms and over time they become family! It's not uncommon to have families who have worked on our farms for 15-20 years who become an integrated part of the team, town, and family. We need these people in Nebraska and in our communities."

Lincoln Chamber

- "What would be the risk if we don't fix this? Without a solution we can't do any of the things in our strategic plan – where we said the community ought to continue to grow, should build a new east beltway, and [many other things]. Continuing to do all of that so that Lincoln continues to be a vibrant community. This would all be at risk. That's not hyperbole."
- "As a state we're still not at 2 million people. We grew to 1 million in our first 30 years, but we still have not added another million in over 120 years."

Nebraska State Education Association

- "In many rural communities, schools and neighborhoods are experiencing a revitalization thanks to the contributions of immigrant community members. Where once there was concern about school closures and the uncertain future of these areas, now there is hope. Our teachers and communities feel optimistic, and as educators, we're committed to serving communities to ensure people put down roots and stay for the long term."
- "Outdated immigration laws, which haven't been meaningfully updated in nearly 40 years, are creating instability for schools and the broader community. This affects not only students and parents but also school staff, including Dreamer and DACA teachers and counselors. The ripple effects are felt throughout our schools, placing strain on the entire system."
- "As baby boomers retire, Nebraska faces a workforce shortage, and we need more people to build the state's next chapter. There's a significant shortage of teachers, as well as a need for people in all areas like transportation, food services, and maintenance. Educators are feeling the pressure, with many being asked to forgo their planning periods to cover additional classes.

Addressing these challenges is essential if we want to maintain thriving schools and communities."

Construction

- "We've gotten to the point where doing the right thing (providing thriveable wages for individuals who are willing to do the work) and following the law (a law that makes it nearly impossible to find a path to citizenship) are no longer the same thing."
- "Part of the solution is right here. There are so many good people who have been part of the community for many years, but we're stuck and we can't hire them until Congress updates the laws."

Another common theme: The struggles of using temporary visas as a temporary fix.

H visas are meant for truly temporary and seasonal needs. Employers describe them as expensive, complicated, rigid, difficult for small employers, and ultimately including a built-in loss of talent and investment when people are required to leave. There is strong interest across partners in finding ways to increase long-term immigrant (rather than temporary non-immigrant) visas for long-term needs.

- H visa comments: It's expensive & complicated. You have to hire a firm to manage the process. There can be communication problems. Often people arrive and then it becomes clear that there are misunderstandings about the pay or the ability to take time off – so then they leave when a raise or time off aren't possible. Then, if you're here on a 9-month visa, by the time you know what's going on, you're 3 months in with only 6 months left. You also can't change jobs – so for example, if you need even just 1 day to help hauling feed, you can't do it.