

Building a Global Talent Pipeline

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Even before COVID-19 hit our borders and changed virtually every business plan and legislative priority, the war for talent was being fought across every industry sector around the world. Communities, states, and nations that want a prosperous future have prioritized issues ranging from reforming K-12 to developing innovative college programs, like our NEXUS degrees; from increasing the number of high school career counselors to providing last-mile grants. Leaders are building lifelong learning programs, reskilling displaced workers, and having honest discussions about the important role of legal immigration in order to win this war.

Consider the facts. Immigrants comprise nearly 10% of Georgia's population. Roughly one in five self-employed business owners in the state is an immigrant and, in 2019, there was an 87% growth rate among Latina-owned start-ups in the state. One in seven immigrants represent Georgia's labor force and nearly half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens. The immigrant population also represents close to \$20 billion in spending power for the state and generates right around \$7 billion in federal, state, and local taxes. Combine these stats with the fact that they hold more than one-third of the jobs in agriculture and over a quarter of the jobs in construction, it is very easy to see how critical their role is to our continued economic recovery, survival, and winning the war for talent.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, America has created over 6.4M new jobs, but there are 3.9M fewer workers in the work force since 2019 as well as 3M fewer VISA recipients now than in 2019. In the next 3 years Georgia will need 122,000 new healthcare workers, 27,000 manufacturing employees, 13,000 construction professionals, and 2,250 logistics workers.

To fill those jobs, we can make simple changes here in Georgia. Currently there are [36,395 DACA-eligible Dreamers](#) that graduated from Georgia high schools.

These Dreamers currently contribute [\\$1.3 billion in spending power](#) to Georgia's economy each year, and nearly \$100 million in state and local taxes.

Allowing [15,000 Dreamers](#) to enroll in Georgia colleges or universities and pay in-state tuition like their other high school peers would keep these talented men and women in our state and employed.

Dreamers graduating from technical college would pay back the state's investment [in less than 10 years](#), and individuals earning bachelor's degrees would pay it back in less than 15 years, via better-paying jobs, higher tax contributions, and higher earning power.

Studies have found that Latino non-citizens residing in states with in-state tuition policies are anywhere from [31 to 54 percent more likely](#) to be enrolled in higher education than their peers in other states.

Research also shows that these policies impact high school completion as well, reducing dropout rates among certain immigrant students by as much as **14 percent**.

Polling conducted by the Georgia Chamber of Commerce confirmed that 76% of Georgia voters support providing access to in-state tuition to Georgia high school graduates who attend technical colleges and universities in rural Georgia to support a strong workforce pipeline.

75% of Georgia voters believe Georgia's economic competitiveness depends on our state being viewed as a hub for the best talent in the country.

74% of Georgia voters agree that increasing the number of individuals that are skilled and educated in our technical colleges and universities will benefit rural communities.

73% of Georgia voters believe allowing all Georgia high school graduates to access in-state tuition to Georgia colleges, including legal immigrants, will ensure our state attracts highly skilled workers, increasing our competitive advantage and ability to grow new jobs.

Simply put, talent – or education – is key. It is incumbent upon our state and federal leaders to consider strategic policy options that decrease the regulatory barriers, expand opportunity for legal immigrants, and maximize the potential of our state to fully recover. Georgia's next decade of economic growth depends on implementing creative, bold, and untraditional workforce solutions, now.

Immigration is an important part of our nation's history and an essential part of our future. Voters, families, churches, and businesses all recognize its importance. Economic statistics demonstrate its value and the events of the past two years have called us all to a common ground where we can look to new and innovative ways to reform and re-envision a New Georgia Economy, together.

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About The Georgia Chamber of Commerce

As the state's largest business advocacy organization, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce represents investors in every county of our state with a diverse cross-section of over 500 industry sectors. Our number one mission is keeping, growing and creating jobs to make Georgia a better state for business. We work to ensure economic competitiveness, innovative solutions to challenges that state faces, and a commitment to high quality of life. More information at gachamber.com

ABOUT THE GHCC

Established in 1984, the GHCC is the largest Hispanic-serving chamber of commerce in the Southeast. As an advocate of the Hispanic business community for over 37 years, the GHCC is the voice of Hispanic business across the state of Georgia, proudly serving a diverse membership of corporations and small businesses. For more information about the chamber, please visit www.ghcc.org.