



## NEW JERSEY FOR ALL – 2015 POLICY PLATFORM

**The New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice (NJAIJ)** is a statewide coalition of more than 20 faith, labor and community organizations that promote policies in New Jersey to support immigrants to become rooted economically, politically and socially within the state.

In 2015, NJAIJ will advance the New Jersey For All campaign, focusing on the following four policy priorities directly impacting immigrant communities across the state. As federal immigration reform stalls, we look to our state and local governments to stand with immigrant communities:

### **Creating Access to Identification**

Hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants are estimated to live in New Jersey. These immigrants make critical contributions to our state, including an estimated \$476 million in state and local taxes per year, but often live in fear and face barriers to meeting their families' basic needs as a result of a lack of identification. Undocumented New Jerseyans have no valid government ID to present to the police, cannot sign leases or open bank accounts, face barriers to entering their children's schools, and fear contact with government, even if they qualify for particular benefits or need to report a crime. Undocumented immigrants who are paid by their employers in cash are often victims of crime because they cannot open bank accounts to keep their wages safe. Cities and counties across the United States have implemented successful municipal ID programs, including New York City, Los Angeles and New Haven, CT. In New Jersey, Mercer County provides IDs to residents issued by local community-based organizations, with recognition from local law enforcement in six municipalities: Trenton, Ewing, Plainsboro, Princeton Borough, Princeton Township, and West Windsor.

**NJAIJ urges localities to develop programs to issue governmental identification to residents—documented and undocumented alike—to increase public safety, increase civic participation, and strengthen community engagement.**

### **Expanding Eligibility for Driver Licenses**

Affording all qualified residents the opportunity to drive legally would make New Jersey roads safer, help the state's economy and increase the well-being of many families. In New Jersey, driving is a necessity of life, but for immigrant families, the decision to drive to work or to drop children at school can lead to deportation. Permitting all New Jerseyans who are qualified and eligible to drive—regardless of immigration status—would make New Jersey's roads and highways safer. Unlicensed and uninsured individuals take more risks when driving than others; unlicensed drivers are five times more likely to be in a fatal crash and nearly ten times more likely to leave the scene of an accident than licensed drivers. New Jersey has the third largest percentage of immigrants in the nation, yet it lags behind the eleven states and Washington, D.C., which currently permit undocumented immigrant residents to apply for driver's licenses. According to New Jersey Policy Perspective, about 464,000 of New Jersey's estimated 525,000 undocumented residents stand to benefit from a change in the state's policy on driver licenses. New Jersey must join the ranks of these states and provide eligibility for driver licenses for all qualified drivers.

**NJAIJ urges local officials to show their support for expanding access to driver licenses for undocumented immigrants by passing local resolutions in support of a change in the law.** Resolutions have already passed in Camden, New Brunswick, Elizabeth, Bridgeton, Dover, Plainfield, Jersey City, and Union County.

## **Building Trust Between Immigrants and Police**

When local law enforcement voluntarily cooperates with or works on behalf of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), significant gaps in trust and cooperation grow between immigrant communities and the police. Local police and county jails in New Jersey routinely cooperate *voluntarily* with ICE by honoring warrantless detainer requests and administrative warrants issued by ICE; provide access to jail facilities to ICE agents; provide inmates in their custody to ICE for interviews or other investigative purposes; and use local resources to notify ICE of an inmate's pending release. New Jersey localities should not be in the business of immigration enforcement—*except where required by law*.

With such close ties between local law enforcement and ICE, immigrants are less likely to report crimes, act as witnesses in criminal investigations and prosecutions, or provide intelligence to law enforcement. Better community policing depends on trust with every community.

**NJAIJ urges municipalities and counties to join localities around the country in adopting policies declining to cooperate with ICE requests to detain an individual unless ICE provides a judicially-issued warrant, and declining to use local resources to facilitate ICE enforcement, except where required by law.**

## **Protecting Immigrants from Unscrupulous Employers**

Immigrant workers often fall victim to wage theft by unscrupulous employers who threaten to turn over workers to ICE if the workers report wage violations to authorities. Wage theft hurts the taxpayers of New Jersey because employers who refuse to pay minimum and overtime wages are more likely to fail to pay payroll, workers compensation and other taxes, robbing state coffers of millions annually. Even when workers are able to successfully win judgments for unpaid wages from the New Jersey Department of Labor, many employers fail to pay, changing the name of their business or declaring bankruptcy to avoid paying workers. Last year, Princeton and New Brunswick passed local ordinances refusing to renew the licenses of businesses that have been found guilty of wage theft either by a court or the state Department of Labor for not paying for all hours worked, paying below minimum wage, or not paying overtime.

**NJAIJ urges municipalities and counties to pass similar ordinances to combat abusive wage theft practices and to protect immigrant workers.**

Please contact Johanna Calle, Program Coordinator of the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice, with any questions at [jcalle@njimmigrantjustice.org](mailto:jcalle@njimmigrantjustice.org).

*NJAIJ Member Organizations: 1199SEIU | 32BJ SEIU | American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey | American Friends Service Committee | Catholic Charities Diocese of Metuchen | Catholic Charities Diocese of Trenton | Centro Comunitario CEUS | Community of Friends in Action | El Centro Hispanoamericano | Faith in New Jersey | First Friends NJ & NY | Haiti Solidarity Network of the North East | Hispanic Family Center of Southern New Jersey | Ironbound Community Corp. | La Fuente, a Tri-State Worker & Community Fund, Inc. | Make the Road New Jersey | National Association of Social Workers – NJ Chapter | New Jersey Communities United | New Jersey Policy Perspective | New Labor | Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Inc. | Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of NJ | Unitarian Society of Ridgewood | Wind of the Spirit*