



IMMIGRANT LEGAL ADVOCACY PROJECT

Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project 2024 Policy & Advocacy Priorities

The Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP) seeks to make systemic law and policy change in Maine and beyond in furtherance of our mission to help low-income immigrants improve their legal status. Our priorities are informed by and built on the needs and goals identified by our client community and other immigrant communities in Maine. Our theory of change is rooted in following the lead of immigrant communities and working in coordination and [coalition](#) with partners to maximize resources and expertise for broad and lasting impact. The below are all priorities for ILAP in 2024 and do not appear in any particular order.

1. Pass and effectively implement the Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act

ILAP calls on Congress to immediately pass the House version of the Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act, which would help people seeking asylum access work permits sooner and remove needless bureaucracy and paperwork to help keep them at work. This legislation would benefit immigrant communities and respond to urgent workforce shortages in Maine and beyond.

2. Expand access to driver's licenses and state IDs to everyone in Maine, regardless of immigration status

ILAP calls on the Maine Legislature to amend the law to give everyone access to driver's licenses and state IDs, regardless of immigration status. Especially in a rural state like Maine, access to transportation is vital, allowing people to obtain work, housing, medical care, education for children, and much more. No one should fear dire immigration consequences trying to meet their basic human needs. Expanded driver's licenses would also improve public and road safety for all Maine people.

3. Establish a Maine Office of New Americans

The Maine Legislature should approve establishing a Maine Office of New Americans to provide services, coordination, and infrastructure to Maine's immigrant communities. A Maine ONA is a crucial investment in the future of all Maine people and the state.

4. Advocate for the rights and protection of immigrant children at all levels of government

Vulnerable immigrant children in Maine should be identified, protected, and provided resources. ILAP calls for policies and protocols that ensure that the safety of all children in Maine is prioritized, regardless of immigration status. ILAP also calls on the federal government to address the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status backlog, which hugely impacts immigrant youth in Maine, delaying access to permanent humanitarian protection and the ability for young people to build their lives and thrive.

5. Protect and expand immigrants' access to services and basic needs in Maine

ILAP supports partners and calls on all levels of government to ensure that laws, policies, and systems are in place to ensure that asylum seekers and other immigrants in Maine and beyond are able to meet their basic needs, including access to healthcare, housing, food, education, and more. In particular, ILAP calls on the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and municipal General Assistance programs to put in place training and systems to ensure that qualified immigrants are not erroneously denied benefits and that municipal and state workers are not inadvertently harming peoples' immigration cases and futures.

6. Use Temporary Protected Status broadly and boldly to protect human life

ILAP advocates for the Department of Homeland Security to use its authority to designate countries for Temporary Protected Status broadly and boldly to safeguard human life, to keep families united, to build a strong U.S. economy and communities, and to promote foreign policy rooted in upholding human rights for all.

7. Expand access to counsel for asylum seekers and immigrants in Maine

Access to qualified legal services is crucial for securing life-saving humanitarian immigration protection. ILAP calls on all levels of government to invest in Maine's immigrant legal services capacity and help ensure new Mainers receive due process, access to justice, security, and stability.

8. Protect immigrant Mainers from immigration scams and fraud

ILAP advocates for action from all levels of government in preventing the unauthorized practice of immigration law – and the serious human consequences that result – as well as holding perpetrators accountable. Outreach and education from government is an essential component in addressing widespread fraud.

9. Pass and effectively implement the Afghan Adjustment Act

ILAP calls on Congress to immediately pass the Afghan Adjustment Act of 2023 which would provide a pathway to safety and security for Afghan evacuees in Maine and across the United States and take key steps to assist those still in Afghanistan and facing persecution, human rights violations, and more due to their affiliation with the United States.

10. Promote a just, accessible U.S. asylum system

In coalition with local and national partners, ILAP works to eliminate policies that prevent asylum seekers from exercising their right to seek asylum in the United States. We call for an asylum system rooted in equity and access for all who need life-saving protection. People have a human right to cross borders to save their lives and the lives of their families.

11. Expand access to protections for immigrant survivors of violence in Maine

ILAP calls on Maine's government and law enforcement to conduct outreach and education and put in place policies that make immigrant survivors of crime more likely to come forward, including U visa policies. Such policies strengthen our communities and make all of us safer.

I2. Promote and expand the rights of Maine farmworkers and other rural immigrant communities

ILAP calls on all levels of government to promote protections against labor exploitation and trafficking in Maine and beyond and to take steps to protect and expand rights for farmworkers and other rural immigrant communities.

I3. Speak out against systemic racism in the U.S. immigration system and build systems rooted in justice

Systemic racism is ingrained in the U.S. immigration system. ILAP uses its voice and supports campaigns and coalitions that consistently shine a light on this truth and take action for equitable and humane immigration law and policy.

I4. Address systemic issues around immigrant enforcement and detention in Maine

ILAP is a voice for immigrant rights on enforcement and detention issues in Maine. ILAP works with partners to track and address systemic issues affecting the Constitutional and other rights of immigrants interacting with the criminal legal system in Maine and immigration enforcement and detention. Issues include ICE holds and law enforcement racial profiling of immigrant communities.

I5. Advocate for a robust and efficient Department of Justice Recognition & Accreditation program

The DOJ R&A program is key in ensuring that low-income immigrants have access to counsel and justice. ILAP supports a well-funded and efficient program to help respond to legal services deserts in Maine and beyond. Significantly, the R&A program also builds capacity for effective, culturally competent representation, providing opportunities for historically marginalized communities – including members of directly impacted immigrant communities -- who may not have access and opportunity to attend law school to receive credentialing, allowing them to practice immigration law.