

# Immigrants in South Carolina's Workforce

South Carolina is home to [nearly 300,000 immigrants](#) who make up 5.6% of the state's population. More than 9,000 of these individuals are eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, also known as Dreamers. More than 93% of these individuals are of working age (16-64), compared to 62.5% of U.S.-born South Carolinians. And many are working in some of the state's fastest-growing and most in-demand fields, including healthcare, education, and social work.

For South Carolina to remain competitive and meet the critical workforce needs across these key industries, it will be crucial to implement policies that not only attract and retain immigrant talent that is complementary to the U.S.-born workforce, but that also build career pathways for immigrants who already call the state home.

One way to achieve this goal is to expand access to professional and occupational licenses for Dreamers and other immigrants with work authorization. South Carolina law currently prohibits this population from obtaining licenses in high-demand fields solely due to their immigration status. More than a dozen states have taken steps to remove such barriers to obtaining licenses, including Arkansas, California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Nevada, South Dakota, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming. **Expanding access to licenses for work authorized immigrants can help South Carolina meet its pressing workforce needs.**

## NURSING

South Carolina is facing critical healthcare shortages and is expected to face a shortfall of over 10,000 Registered Nurses (RNs) by 2030, a deficit only exceeded by California, Texas, and New Jersey. It is also one of 33 states that will face a shortage of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), with a projected deficit of 4,700 nurses.<sup>1</sup> While immigrant nurses have helped fill many of these roles, the demand will only grow as experienced nurses continue to retire and the need for bilingual and culturally competent care increases.

From 2015 to 2019, job postings seeking candidates with a nursing certificate increased from **12,862** to **17,588**, or by

**+36.7%** ● → ●

From 2015 to 2019, Registered Nurses recorded the most job postings, increasing by

**+36.2%** ● → ●



Between 2014 and 2019, immigrants accounted for an average of **4.5%** of jobs that required a nursing certification or license.

During the same time period, demand for Health Managers increased by

**+43.5%** ● → ●

while postings for Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses increased by **+23.7%**.

From 2015 to 2019, the hospital industry had the highest demand for certified nurses, while educational services saw the largest percentage increase in demand, from **133** to **564** postings, or by **+324.1%**.

## K-12 EDUCATION

A recent report<sup>2</sup> found that South Carolina is facing a significant teacher shortage, especially in the fields of science, math, social studies, and early childhood education. As school districts struggle to find licensed educators to fill open positions, immigrant South Carolinians can help meet this growing demand.

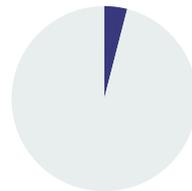
From 2015 to 2019, job postings seeking candidates with a teaching certificate increased from **744** to **887**, or by

**+19.2%** ● → ●

From 2015 to 2019, Middle School Teachers recorded the most job postings, increasing from **123** to **208**, or by

**+69.1%** ● → ●

From 2015 to 2019, the educational services industry had the highest demand for candidates with teacher certification, while executive & legislative government support employers was the industry with the next-highest demand, marking a **+195.6%** increase in job postings.



Between 2014 and 2019, immigrants accounted for an average of **3.6%** of jobs that required a teaching certification or license.

**During the same time period, demand for coaching jobs increased by**

**+113.7%** ● → ●

and those for Elementary School Teachers increased by **+85.9%**.

## SOCIAL WORK AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

As South Carolina's population continues to age and the state and cities grapple with their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, homelessness, incarceration, and the opioid crisis, the demand for social workers and behavioral health experts continues to grow.<sup>3</sup>

From 2015 to 2019, job postings seeking candidates with a social work or counseling certificate increased from **656** to **1,009**, or by

**+53.8%** ● → ●

**During the same time period, demand for Mental Health Counselors increased by**

**+84.4%** ● → ●

and those for Social Workers increased by **+34.1%**.

General Medical and Surgical Hospitals was the largest industry seeking certified social workers, with a **+185.7%** increase in job postings between 2015 and 2019. South Carolina's colleges and universities had the second-highest demand for certified social workers, with a **10-times increase** in job postings during this same period.

**Dreamers and other work-authorized immigrants are already playing a critical role in South Carolina's economy. As demand for jobs in healthcare, education, and social work continue to grow, the state has an opportunity to leverage this work force and expand economic opportunity for all South Carolinians.**

## ENDNOTES

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- 1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, National Center for Health Workforce Analysis (2017). National and Regional Supply and Demand Projections of the Nursing Workforce: 2014-2030. Available at: [https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bhw/nchwa/projections/NCHWA\\_HRSA\\_Nursing\\_Report.pdf](https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bhw/nchwa/projections/NCHWA_HRSA_Nursing_Report.pdf)
- 2 Teacher Shortage Areas Report (2020). U.S. Department of Education. Available at: <https://tsa.ed.gov/#/reports>
- 3 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, National Center for Health Workforce Analysis (2018). State-Level Projections of Supply and Demand for Behavioral Health Occupations: 2016-2030, Available at: <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/data-research/state-level-estimates-report-2018.pdf>