



STRATEGIC SUGGESTIONS FOR ADVOCATES

- Our job is to convince legislators that this legislation is not in the best interests of the people of Georgia. Whether they like immigrants or not, we want our conversations with them to convince them that this proposal will harm the public health and safety of everyone in the state.
- Remember that roughly 20% of the population is already with us, and another 20% will never support our views. The goal of our advocacy with legislators and the general public is to convince the 60% in the middle that this policy is bad for them.
- Our strongest arguments toward this end are those that focus on preserving the public health and public safety. It is useful, when you can, to pair immigrant rights advocates with partners in the health care community, as well as those working on domestic violence or other safety issues.
- It may make sense to acknowledge others' frustration with our nation's immigration system. The one place where everyone seems to agree on immigration policy is that our current system is broken. We can all agree on the need for reform (even if we're unlikely to agree on the details!) What we're saying is that this policy won't fix that problem, and it will instead create many new local problems.

**PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF OUR STATE
SUPPORT REAL IMMIGRATION REFORM**

SAY NO TO H.R. 256

There is a great deal of frustration about our nation's broken immigration system, but H.R. 256 will not solve the problem. It will neither reduce the immigrant population, nor discourage those who come to the U.S. and to our state to work. There is an active immigration reform debate going on at the federal level, where our nation's immigration laws are made. As we engage in that debate, we should not pass legislation which does nothing to fix those problems, and instead creates new ones.

H.R. 256 will undermine public health in our state.

- Immigrants would be denied essential preventive services, like vaccinations, that are designed to keep us ALL safe. During potentially dangerous outbreaks, it is in the interest of the general public to make sure that prevention and treatment are available to everyone. By excluding immigrants from this type of care, this proposal seriously endangers the public health.
- This proposal would force public health employees, like doctors, nurses, and emergency personnel, to become immigration enforcers, requiring them to spend valuable time and resources checking documents rather than providing services. Most Americans don't carry documents showing that they belong in their own country, and are likely to face delays when seeking medical care. Similarly, legal immigrants have a variety of statuses under dozens of different visa categories. It is unwise and unfair to expect essential medical personnel to implement this complex area of law.

H.R. 256 will undermine the public safety.

- This bill would require already overburdened law enforcement personnel to check the immigration documents of people they come into contact with. Many local police departments and police chiefs object to these kinds of policies because they discourage immigrant communities from having contact with police, fire departments, and other civic authorities. When immigrants fear reporting crimes, acting as witnesses, or reporting domestic violence, the safety of the larger community is jeopardized.
- The California Police Chief's Association, the El Paso (TX) Police Officers Association, and the Chiefs of Police in Seattle, Nashville, Boston, and many other cities have publicly objected to these kinds of policies because they undermine law enforcement's ability to do its job. In addition, former Georgia Representative Bob Barr has publicly opposed similar legislation at the national level (United Press International, April 30, 2004.)

H.R. 256's education provisions are unconstitutional and would undermine education in our state.

The Supreme Court, in its *Plyler v. Doe* decision in the 1980s, ruled that it is unconstitutional to deny a public education to undocumented children. Under this decision, it is illegal for public school officials to check the immigration status of students as proposed in H.R. 256. The Court ruled that children are innocent of their immigration status because they did not make the choice to migrate, and that denying them access to education undermines the well-being of the larger community.

H.R.256 is a wasteful and inefficient use of resources. This bill would turn a whole variety of state and local employees into immigration agents. The proposal would require those delivering any publicly funded service to check the immigration status of those they come into contact with. This broad language would mean that everyone from health providers, law enforcement officers, and emergency personnel, to librarians, teachers, and community programs receiving state or local funds will be forced to spend valuable time and resources checking the immigration documents of those they come into contact with. This is a wasteful, inefficient, and potentially harmful requirement which will, in the end, accomplish nothing towards immigration control.

By restricting access to drivers licenses, H.R. 256 undermines the public safety. Most Americans, even those who are uncomfortable with the presence of immigrants in their states, recognize that they come to the U.S. to work, and are participating actively in the workforce. Denying access to driver licenses will simply result in unlicensed, uninsured drivers; it will not reduce immigration but will have a negative impact on the broader community.