

# The Economic Benefits of the Empire State Licensing Act

## Immigrants in New York State's Workforce

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Immigrants and refugees play a crucial role in New York's economy, including in some of the state's fastest-growing and most in-demand fields, such as healthcare, behavioral health, and education.<sup>1</sup> In the overall workforce, new Americans already punch above their weight. In 2019, they made up 27.2 percent of the state's workforce<sup>2</sup> despite comprising just 22 percent of its population.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, New York is going to need more workers to complement the U.S.-born workforce, which is facing increasingly critical shortages as the state's population ages. In 2021, more than 6.0 million New Yorkers were 55 or older and will reach retirement age in the next decade, further exacerbating workforce shortages.<sup>4</sup>

**For New York to remain competitive and address critical workforce shortages in high-demand fields, it must implement policies that attract and retain immigrant and refugee talent and build career pathways for immigrants and refugees who are already here.**

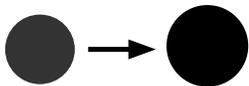
One solution is to expand access to professional and occupational licenses for non-citizens. New York law currently prohibits many immigrants from obtaining state occupational and professional licenses, certificates, and registrations solely due to their immigration status. The Empire State Licensing Act<sup>5</sup> would remove such barriers, expanding economic opportunities to all residents and in the process help meet the state's pressing workforce needs. In so doing, New York would join Arkansas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, and New Jersey, states that have already taken similar steps.

### THE GROWING DEMAND FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN NEW YORK

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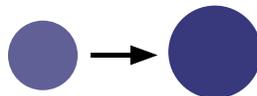
From 2017 to 2021, overall online job postings in New York increased from 1.4 million to 1.9 million,<sup>6</sup> or

**+38.2%**



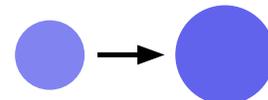
From 2017 to 2021, overall online job postings in the healthcare industry<sup>7</sup> increased by

**+78.5%**



During the same period, online job postings for healthcare occupations that listed bilingual skills<sup>8</sup> grew by

**+104.1%**



**Removing the barriers that prevent immigrants and refugees from entering the healthcare field will be crucial as the state's population continues to age out of the workforce.**

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## NURSING

New York is one of 33 states nationally—and one of six states in the Northeast—projected to face a critical shortage of licensed practical nurses (LPNs) by 2030, with a projected deficit of **3,600 LPNs**.<sup>9</sup> While immigrant nurses already help fill many positions, a critical gap in care could widen if the state does not take action to expand professional licensing opportunities to qualified immigrants. Experienced nurses are continuing to age into retirement, decreasing care available to all Americans, while at the same time the need for culturally competent and multilingual care is increasing.

**From 2017 to 2021, online job postings for nursing assistants grew more than any other nursing positions,<sup>10</sup> increasing by:**

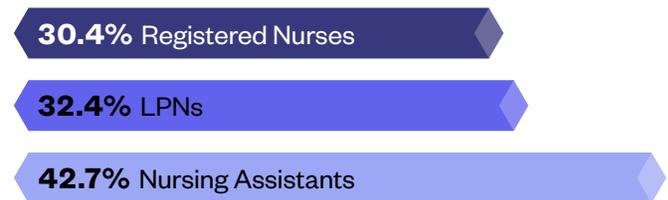
**+127.0%** ●→●

**During that same period, demand for LPNs<sup>11</sup> increased by:**

**+80.0%** ●→●

**Registered nurses (RNs) recorded the most job postings in healthcare in 2021.<sup>12</sup>**

The share of immigrants in 2019 working as:<sup>13</sup>



## ORAL HEALTH

The demand for oral healthcare workers in the state also grew between 2017 and 2021.<sup>14</sup>

**From 2017 to 2021, online job postings for dentists nearly doubled,<sup>15</sup> growing from:**

**416 to 818**

**During the same period, job postings for dental hygienists and assistants increased nearly tenfold,<sup>16</sup> from:**

**129 to 1,296**

The share of workers in 2019 who were immigrants.<sup>17</sup>



## EMERGENCY SERVICES

**Demand for paramedics increased between 2017 and 2021, from 230 to 357,<sup>18</sup> or:**

**+55.2%** ● → ●



The share of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) in New York who were immigrants in 2019.<sup>19</sup>

## SOCIAL WORK AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

As the nation continues to grow more linguistically and culturally diverse, and as New York grapples with an aging population, while also responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, homeless and incarcerated populations, and the opioid crisis, the demand for culturally competent and multilingual social workers and behavioral health experts in the state continues to grow.

**From 2017 to 2021, online job postings for general social workers<sup>20</sup> in New York increased by:**

**+72.8%** ● → ●

**From 2017 to 2021, online job postings for mental health social workers<sup>23</sup> increased by:**

**+330.0%** ● → ●

**From 2017 to 2021, online job postings for social work and counseling occupations that listed bilingual skills<sup>21</sup> grew by:**

**+89.4%** ● → ●

**Demand for healthcare social workers<sup>24</sup> in New York increased substantially, rising:**

**+172.4%** ● → ●

**During the same period, substance abuse counseling postings**

**doubled.<sup>22</sup>**

The share of immigrants in 2019 working as:<sup>25</sup>

**25.7%** Healthcare Social Workers

**18.4%** Social Workers

**14.6%** Counseling Related Professions

## K-12 EDUCATION

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As demand for teachers continues to grow, especially in areas like English as a second language, districts are struggling to find enough licensed educators. Immigrants are already playing a growing role in helping fill these positions, but as the shortage persists, more will be needed.

**From 2017 to 2021, job postings in New York's educational industry<sup>26</sup> increased by:**

**+38.6%** ●→●

**During that same period, online job postings for teachers and teaching assistants working in New York's elementary, middle, and secondary schools**

**doubled.<sup>27</sup>**

**From 2017 to 2021, online job postings for K-12 teachers and educational support occupations that listed bilingual skills<sup>28</sup> grew by:**

**+59.3%** ●→●

**In 2021, middle school teachers were the highest in demand,<sup>29</sup> with job postings increasing by:**

**+76.1%** ●→●

**Online job postings for teaching assistants grew the most,<sup>30</sup> more than tripling from**

**2,355 to 7,225**

The share of workers in 2019 who were immigrants.<sup>31</sup>

**20.3%** Teaching Assistants

**12.3%** K-12 Teachers

**Immigrants across the skills spectrum already play a crucial role in New York's workforce. But as fields like healthcare, social work, and education face shrinking labor pools, more workers will be needed to complement the U.S.-born workforce. Many states have recognized the importance of removing licensing barriers in order to leverage the skills and talent of new Americans. New York, too, must expand professional and occupational licensing opportunities to all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, if it is to care for, educate, and protect the state's future.**

## ENDNOTES

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1. Unless stated otherwise, all data in this report is reflective of New York.
2. American Immigration Council analysis of Burning Glass Technologies Labor Insight™ 2022.
3. “Map the Impact: New York,” New American Economy, April 12, 2022, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/newyork/>.
4. American Immigration Council analysis of Burning Glass Technologies Labor Insight™ 2022.
5. Cruz, Catalina. “New York State Assembly.” Bill Search and Legislative Information | New York State Assembly. Accessed April 12, 2022. <https://nyassembly.gov/leg/?term=2021&bn=A01952>.
6. American Immigration Council analysis of Burning Glass Technologies Labor Insight™ 2022.
7. Ibid.
8. This figure includes nurses, health technicians, pharmacists, dentists, and healthcare support occupations, but does not include physicians. Ibid
9. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Workforce, and National Center for Health Workforce Analysis. “Supply and Demand Projections of the Nursing Workforce: 2014-2030.” Bureau of Health Workforce, July 21, 2017. <https://bhwh.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/data-research/nchwa-hrsa-nursing-report.pdf>.
10. American Immigration Council analysis of Burning Glass Technologies Labor Insight™ 2022.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. American Immigration Council analysis of the IPUMS microdata from the 2019 American Community Survey, 1-Year Sample.
14. American Immigration Council analysis of Burning Glass Technologies Labor Insight™ 2022.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. American Immigration Council analysis of the IPUMS microdata from the 2019 American Community Survey, 1-Year Sample.
18. American Immigration Council analysis of Burning Glass Technologies Labor Insight™ 2022.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. American Immigration Council analysis of the IPUMS microdata from the 2019 American Community Survey, 1-Year Sample.
26. American Immigration Council analysis of Burning Glass Technologies Labor Insight™ 2022.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. American Immigration Council analysis of the IPUMS microdata from the 2019 American Community Survey, 1-Year Sample.