

Beyond Welcoming

A Platform for Immigrant Inclusion for the Next Nashville & Davidson County Metropolitan Government

Nashville

May 2019



While the federal and state governments unleash unrelenting attacks on immigrants and refugees, cities like Nashville can cast a new vision of belonging for our community and country. In this historic moment, cities must boldly lead to protect immigrant communities and defend our values. **Below is a summary of our policy blueprint for Nashville's mayor and metro council so that we can be a truly welcoming city.**



Dismantle the Deportation Pipeline

Each week in Nashville, ICE is terrorizing immigrant neighborhoods and ripping residents away from their families and communities. The federal government's campaign of mass deportations is being supported by the resources and partnership of local governments. **Nashville can change policies and practices to ensure our city government isn't helping ICE deport our neighbors so residents feel safe interacting with local government.** For example, the city must end the agreement that allows ICE to use our local jail as an immigrant detention facility and clarify policies to draw a bright line between the work of our city and federal immigration enforcement.



Protect Nashvillians from Deportation

Beyond disentangling the work of city government from federal immigration enforcement, the city can proactively protect Nashvillians from deportation. For example, local law enforcement and other government agencies could be required to inform residents of their rights when encountering immigration agents, and the city can create a Legal Defense Fund to help Nashvillians get a fair shot at fighting their deportation in immigration court, where they are not guaranteed an attorney.



Reform Policing & the Criminal Justice System

As demonstrated in the *Driving While Black* report, communities of color are criminalized, overpoliced, and disproportionately represented in our criminal justice system. **For immigrants, involvement in the criminal justice system, even for minor crimes, can lead to deportation and family separation.** The next mayor and council must institute policing and criminal justice reforms that ensure fairness, due process, and racial equity.



Defend Workers' Rights & Economic Opportunity

Immigrants and refugees have played a key role in our city's economic growth. Across sectors and industries, immigrant families have helped make Nashville thrive. **Although immigrants have high participation in the labor force, they experience higher rates of poverty than their U.S. born counterparts.** The city can invest in workforce development and entrepreneurship in the immigrant community, set a high standard for quality jobs, and hold bad actors accountable for exploiting workers and low-income communities.

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Invest in Affordable Housing & Thriving, Connected Neighborhoods

If Nashville wants to be a welcoming city, we must ensure that low- and middle-income families—including immigrants and refugees—can have a safe and affordable place to live. **The city must make bold investments in affordable housing, create policies and programs that mitigate the impacts of displacement and protect tenant rights that are accessible to limited English proficient residents.** The city should ensure that resources for infrastructure, transit, parks, and other neighborhood improvements are equitably invested and that the assets of immigrant neighborhoods are protected and supported.



Increase Access to Services & Civic Engagement

Cities work best when everyone is able to fully participate and contribute. Immigrants and refugees, especially those who are newly arrived, face unique barriers to being able to access and engage with government agencies. **The mayor and city council should ensure city programs and services are accessible regardless of immigration status or language ability, support more targeted and robust immigrant integration initiatives, and coordinate its efforts through an empowered Office of New Americans.** The city should invest in leadership development within immigrant communities and opportunities to engage and lead in the civic and political life of our community.



Ensure Equitable & Inclusive Education

More than a third of Metro Nashville Public School students come from households that speak another language than English; the future of our city depends on the success of all students and the participation of all families. **Nashville must support MNPS in creating successful, equitable, and inclusive schools where all children can learn and thrive.** For example, the mayor and council should increase MNPS funding and investments that increase educational equity. City leaders can support the development and implementation of policies and programs to ensure families can engage in the school system without fear of immigration enforcement and that students whose parents have been detained or deported are supported.



Support Healthy Communities

Federal and state policy changes and proposals have sent a wave of fear through immigrant communities making families hesitant to visit the doctor or access health and nutrition services because of fear it may lead to deportation. We also know that fear and deportation of a loved one can lead to toxic stress and trauma for children of immigrants. **Our city can invest in resources and programs and enact policy change to educate communities members and public employees, restore trust and confidence in accessing services, and mitigate the harm that persistent fear of deportation can cause.**



Defend Immigrant & Refugee Communities

In the face of unrelenting attacks on immigrants and refugees, we need our elected officials to take a bold stance in defending our residents and our values against the federal government and our state legislature - **in the public conversation, in the legislature, and in the courts.**