



### POST-WEBINAR RECAP: WEBINAR 19

## State and Local Advocacy Responses to COVID-19

March 26, 2020

### SPEAKERS

- Shiu-Ming Cheer, [cheer@nilc.org](mailto:cheer@nilc.org)  
Director of Movement Building & Strategic Partnerships, National Immigration Law Center
- Marianne Bellesorte, [marianne@familyvaluesatwork.org](mailto:marianne@familyvaluesatwork.org)  
National Implementation Director, Family Values @ Work (FV@W)
- Raquel Lane-Arellano, [raquel@coloradoimmigrant.org](mailto:raquel@coloradoimmigrant.org)  
Policy Manager, Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
- Lisa Sherman-Nikolaus, [lisa@tnimmigrant.org](mailto:lisa@tnimmigrant.org)  
Policy Director, Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition

### SUMMARY

#### Federal Relief Package

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed serious structural weaknesses across many, if not all, sectors in our nation. The moment we're living in has illustrated that we're *all* interconnected, including immigrants. We've seen that no one is healthy unless we all are, and that means we all need equal access to programs that make us stronger.

At the federal level, Congress is taking steps to create programs to mitigate the harm of the coronavirus pandemic. In their third piece of legislation, lawmakers didn't go far enough to cover immigrants. We lost several fights, including the push to ensure that everyone in the U.S., regardless of immigration status, has access to emergency Medicaid that covers COVID-19-related testing and treatment. We also lost fights for rebate fixes to include individuals who file taxes with Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs) and members of mixed-immigration status households, and to extend work authorization automatically for those with DACA or TPS. However, the COVID 3.0 legislation contained victories: DHS was blocked from transferring money from FEMA and HHS to ICE and CBP, as well as requesting additional funding for enforcement practices.

#### Enforcement

Despite this unprecedented global public health crisis, ICE is continuing to make arrests and conduct raids across the country. It's also performing I-9 audits as well as continuing to detain people in dangerous conditions, where both people being held and guards are testing positive for COVID-19.

Demands from national human rights organizations include eliminating ICE check-ins and mandatory court appearances, ceasing all local enforcement operations, and releasing people currently detained in ICE custody. The response at the state and local levels has included sending letters to DHS and ICE, pressuring elected officials to come out against federal enforcement practices, and taking direct and legal action.

#### Paid Leave Programs

The federal relief legislation enacted to date leaves immigrant workers out in basic ways. State and local governments have an opportunity to fill these gaps, e.g., by developing inclusive paid leave programs in every

## State and Local Advocacy Responses to COVID-19

worker's benefits package.

Some states already have paid leave programs; however, the requirements for these programs vary from state to state. Some states accept only Social Security numbers, some accept ITINs, while other states only require proof that you work in that state. Fourteen states and 22 localities have paid sick days laws, whereas only 9 states have paid family leave laws. Now is the time to come up with an answer to the question, "What can happen when we expand and enforce these programs?"

### State Partners' Responses

Two of our WITS coalition partners, CIRC in Colorado and TIRRC in Tennessee, shared the steps they've taken to ensure that any state and local actions are inclusive of immigrants, including advocating for immigrant workers' rights. In Colorado, CIRC's immediate response included pulling together resources, focusing on accessible community education, and pivoting its policy response towards legislative work. By working in collaboration with other state organizations and coalitions, CIRC and partners were able to pool and streamline these advocates' demands to for presentation to the governor. Their demands include access to paid family leave and an official statement against ICE enforcement.

The situation in Tennessee is like the one in Colorado, with all TIRRC's resources being redirected towards a state and local response to COVID-19. TIRRC's first response was to send a letter to state and local officials with policy demands, including equitable health care access, accessible community education resources, and supporting families and small businesses financially. On top of monitoring its policy recommendations, TIRRC is focused on gathering stories from affected community members and developing advocacy and communications strategies, underscoring a need for close collaboration with fellow organizations.

**Recording:** <https://register.gotowebinar.com/recording/7113154541681589249>

**PowerPoint:** <https://hub.winninginthestates.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/WITS-Webinar17-Slides-2020-02-28.pdf>

## RESOURCES

- [Print Resources](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [COVID-19 Policy Tracker](#) (MultiState)
- [COVID-19: Free Them All](#) (Detention Watch Network)
- [Understanding the Impact of Key Provisions of COVID-19 Relief Bills on Immigrant Communities](#) (NILC)

### Health

- [Working Economics Blog](#) (Economic Policy Institute)
- [You Have Rights: Protect Your Health](#) (Protecting Immigrant Families — translations available on the Know Your Rights webpage)
- [Update on Access to Health Care Immigrants and Their Families](#) (NILC)

### Workers' Rights

- [The Worker's Guide: Your Rights During COVID-19](#) (Legal Aid at Work, et al.)
- [La guía del trabajador: Sus derechos durante el COVID-19](#) (Legal Aid at Work, et al.)
- [Know Your Rights Under Emergency Coronavirus Laws](#) (FamilyValues@Work)
- [Factsheets on Local/State Paid Sick Days and Paid Family Leave Laws](#) (FamilyValues@Work)