

MOUNTAIN DREAMERS

Standing Up for Immigrant Rights

**Engaging Immigrant
Communities: Rural and
Resort Towns**

Peter Bakken
Mountain Dreamers
Executive Director

Carol Saade
Town of Breckenridge
Council Member



Isaura Cirillo

Michel Infante

Town of Breckenridge
Social Equity Advisory
Commission
Commissioner

Family & Intercultural
Resource Center
*Supportive Services
Manager*

In many of Colorado's rural and resort communities, immigrants and their families make up the “quiet workforce” that is an integral part of our communities' rich cultures, and crucial to the success of our local economies.

Municipalities throughout Colorado are exploring how to better **reach, engage, and serve** these demographically significant and growing populations.

In this forum we will discuss *together* how municipalities, community organizations, businesses, and members of the immigrant community can partner to overcome barriers to engagement and communication, and create more equitable, just, and engaged communities.

Mountain Dreamers

Our Mission:

To inspire, educate and advocate for immigrants and their allies to create systems that advance equity and social justice in our Mountain communities.

Our Vision:

An inclusive Mountain community that promotes equitable opportunities for immigrants from diverse backgrounds to be safe, to be celebrated and to thrive.

Mountain Region Demographics from School Enrollment Numbers

Summit County School District (Breckenridge, Frisco, Silverthorne, Dillon)

- **42% Hispanic & Other (non White)**

Eagle County Schools (Vail, Beaver Creek, Edwards, Eagle, Gypsum)

- **56% Hispanic & Other (non White)**

Roaring Fork School District (Aspen, Basalt, Carbondale, Glenwood)

- **58% Hispanic & Other (non White)**

Garfield School District (New Castle, Silt, Rifle)

- **53% Hispanic & Other (non White)**

***Undocumented* Immigrants in Colorado**

- Undocumented Residents: Estimated 190,000
- 70% over age 16 are employed. Largest % are in Construction, followed by Food/Accommodation
- 81% from Mexico/Central America
- Over 275,000 people in Colorado, including US citizen children, live with at least one undocumented family member

Colorado Immigrants Statewide

Immigrant Residents:
549,181

Immigrant Taxes Paid:
\$5.8B

Immigrant Spending
Power:
\$15.6B





For most undocumented immigrants living and working in the U.S., ***there is no pathway in the law to legal status or citizenship.***

AMERICA

STANDING UP FOR WHAT
YOU LOVE

IS HOME

1/10 colorado residents is an immigrant
1/8 workers is an immigrant
13.2% of STEM workers are immigrants
13.7% foreign-born health aides
30% of immigrants have a college degree



Summit High School Mountain Dreamers
in silent protest - America is Home!



DACA - Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

- 18,555 DACA recipients in Colorado
- As of 2019, 64% of DACA-eligible residents had applied for DACA
- Provides 2-year protection from deportation and a work permit

More Mountain Dreamers!



Challenges to Engagement

Language Justice: Translation & Interpretation

Communication, Finding What Works: Traditional Media - Social Media -
Messaging Apps

Working People Without the Time or Resources to Engage

Fear & Lack of Trust

Lack Knowledge of Civic Systems

Legal Status Issues

The Really Difficult Issues to Address

Racist/Anti-Immigrant Attitudes & Biases

Tokenism

Engage and Serve - from the Municipality's Perspective

What's needed - changes in *policy and procedure*, and *financial & staff investments* in efforts to increase inclusion, outreach, and civic engagement

Translation and Interpretation - Spanish speaking staff; interpretation at meetings; translation of notices, documents, website, social media posts

Partnering with community organizations with established relationships - building trust - for outreach and distribution of information:

- **FIRC (emergency financial assistance - rent, utilities, & food; early childhood program, health care access)**
- **Mtn Dreamers (immigration legal aid including housing & wage complaints, drivers licenses, joint events with law enforcement)**

Cultural events ie, Dia de los Muertos celebration engaging immigrants through trusted partners,

Breckenridge Tourism Office efforts to survey immigrant populations

Breckenridge Social Equity Advisory Commission



Reason for being - Town acknowledged more could be done better to serve all residents and address inequities

Established as a temporary commission so individuals from outside the small TOB boundaries could apply

In seeking applicants had to be actively inclusive - translation, various channels, personal asks through trusted partner organizations

Currently building a foundation with the help of an equity consultant

The advisory commission will make recommendations to Town Council; advise, advocate, create and review formal and informal policies

Some low hanging fruit (i.e. translation), but systemic change takes time

Municipal & State Immigration Legal Services Funds

City of Denver: [Denver Immigrant Legal Services Fund](#)

To date about \$755,000 distributed

Ft. Collins: [Municipal Immigration Legal Defense Pilot Program](#)

Initial pilot program funding \$150,000

State of Colorado: [Statewide Immigration Defense Fund \(HB21-1194\)](#)

Initial funding of \$100,000 from the state

New State Laws Affecting Immigrants and Municipalities

[Housing Public Benefit Verification Requirement](#)

The act removes the requirement to verify lawful presence for public or assisted housing benefits unless otherwise required by federal law. Effective: April 15, 2021.

[Remove Lawful Presence Verification Credentialing](#)

In 2006, the General Assembly met in a special session and passed several measures addressing immigration. The act reverses the action taken during that special session by repealing the requirement that local governments require verification of lawful presence in the United States in order for applicants to qualify for a license, certificate, or registration to practice a regulated profession.

Effective: May 27, 2021.

Remove Barriers to Certain Public Opportunities

Upon passage of the act, lawful presence in the United States will no longer be a qualification for receipt of any state or local benefit as defined by federal immigration laws. Starting on July 1, 2022, this bill repeals the broad prohibition of providing state and local public benefits to individuals not lawfully present and repeals specific requirements that individuals must be lawfully present when applying for **professional licenses, public works contracts, and local business licenses**. The act expands what forms of identifications may be accepted by state agencies and repeals the Secure and Verifiable Identity Act. Under 8 U.S. Code § 1621, unlawfully present individuals are ineligible to receive any “state and local benefits” unless a state enacts a law granting eligibility to these individuals. State and local benefits are defined in federal law to include the following, if provided by a state or local government: **grants, contracts, loans, professional or commercial licenses, retirement benefits, welfare and food assistance, healthcare, disability benefits, public or assisted housing, postsecondary education, unemployment benefits, or any other similar benefits**. With the passage of this act, local governments can no longer require proof of lawful residence to administer these benefits.

Effective: June 25, 2021.

COVID Response

What worked and lessons learned

Communication and Equity efforts:

- Educational outreach outreach
- Vaccine and testing efforts

Direct assistance through trusted community partners:

- Left Behind Workers Fund
 - Rental relief

Q&A and Discussion

There is still much work to be done...

www.MountainDreamers.org