



Brief: Services for Immigrants

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Key Points:

1. Salvation depends upon charitable acts, including welcoming foreigners.
2. Immigrants have access to legal records, education, & certain healthcare.
3. We oppose any effort to reduce access to these and similar services.

A Catholic perspective: We oppose efforts to reduce immigrants' access to I.D. cards, driver licenses, birth certificates, education, and healthcare. A long-standing principle in the Judeo-Christian tradition requires that foreigners be treated justly: "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt."^[1] Catholic teaching maintains that, among other acts of charity, our salvation depends upon welcoming people foreign to us.^[2] Accordingly, we apply this teaching to our modern day:

The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authori-

ties should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him. Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants' duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws, and to assist in carrying civic burdens.^[3]

Texas law and policy: While national laws define who and how many foreign-born persons can enter the U.S., Texas laws affect immigrants after their arrival, both through law enforcement and by integrating immigrants



Table 1: Eligibility for health services and insurance, by immigration status (2016)

Program or Service*	Available to lawful immigrants?	Available to unlawful immigrants?
Medicaid for children 18 or younger	Yes.	No
Medicaid for adults over 18	Yes only for immigrants before 08/96.	No.
ACA Marketplace Insurance, with or without subsidies	Yes.	No.
CHIP for children 18 or younger	Yes.	No.
Refugee Medical Assistance**	Yes.	No.
County Hospital or Health Districts and Indigent Care Programs	Yes.	Varies by county.
CHIP Perinatal Program	Yes.	Yes.
Health services necessary to protect life of safety	Yes.	Yes.
Insurance purchase outside marketplace without subsidy	Yes.	Yes.
Programs using federal health care block grant funds	Yes.	Yes.
Emergency Medicaid	Yes.**	Yes.**

* For a more detailed description of programs and services, see Anne Dunkelberg, *Immigrant's Access to Health Care in Texas: An Updated Landscape*. Oct. 2016.

** Eligibility includes the same categories of individuals as U.S. citizens, such as low-income parents, pregnant women, seniors, and disabled persons.

into Texas' social, political, and economic life.^[4] Laws affecting legal records, education, and healthcare affect successful integration.

Legal documents: Texas law requires applicants for a state I.D. or driver license to show proof of U.S. citizenship or lawful residence.^[5] Applicants seeking a birth certificate for their immediate family members may acquire the certificate by submitting several types of documents which verify their identity.^[6]

Education: Texas legislators revised state law in 1975 to withhold funds from school districts for the education of children not legally admitted into the U.S. and authorized districts to deny enrollment to these children.^[7] The U.S. Supreme Court struck down this law in *Plyler v. Doe*, on the basis that it violated the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause.^[8]

Regarding higher education, state law currently allows undocumented Texas high school graduates to receive in-state tuition rates at public universities.^[9]

Healthcare: Table 1 summarizes immigrants'

access to health services and insurance.^[10]

Key bill summaries: HB 413 ends in-state college tuition rates for undocumented students who graduate from Texas high schools. We oppose this bill.

HB 2468 requires proof of citizenship or birth in the U.S. before an insurance company can sell auto insurance to a person in Texas. We oppose this bill.

SB 576 eliminates the Texas DREAM Act, which allows resident tuition for undocumented immigrants who completed high school in Texas. We oppose this bill.

Call to action: Please visit txcatholic.org/migration to find and contact your lawmaker. Please also pray for Texas and our legislators, that they may welcome foreigners who seek security and the opportunity for their family.

The TCCB is a federation of Roman Catholic dioceses and ordinariates in Texas. There are 8 million Catholics living in our state. Find TXCatholic on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Endnotes

1. Lev. 19:33-34.
2. Mt. 25:35-46.
3. Catechism of the Catholic Church [#2241](#).
4. “The States enjoy no power with respect to the classification of aliens.” See U.S. Supreme Court, [Plyler v. Doe](#) page 457 U.S. 225, cf. footnote 23. For an introduction to the 5 clauses in the U.S. Constitution which enumerate the federal government’s power to regulate immigration, see Alienikoff et. al, *Immigration and Citizenship: Process and Policy*. 7th Ed. 188-191. See TCCB, [Brief: Immigration Law Enforcement](#).
5. Texas Transportation Code § [521.101\(d-1\)\(1\)](#); § [521.142\(a\)](#); § [521.1425\(c\)](#). The process of verifying legal status is usually instantaneous but can take up to thirty days. See: Texas Department of Public Safety, [Verifying Lawful Presence](#).)
6. Texas Department of State Health Services, [Birth Certificate ID Requirements in Texas](#). 2016. A recent settlement in federal court ended in an agreement upon an updated list of acceptable documents. See: U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas, *Perales Serna et al v. Texas DSHS, Vital Statistics Unit et al*. [Settlement Agreement](#). July 20, 2016; cf. 25 TAC [Ch. 181.28](#).
7. Texas State Law Library, 1975 Supplement to West’s Texas Statutes 1974. § [21.031](#), page 41.
8. U.S. Supreme Court, [Plyler v. Doe](#), 457 U.S. 202 (1982). In addition to this reversal, Texas now maintains a Migrant Education Program, which enrolls about 31,000 students whose parents work in the fishing and agriculture industries and frequently travel for work. See: Texas Education Agency, [Title I, Part C - Education of Migratory Children](#).
9. Texas Education Code § [54.052](#).
10. Anne Dunkelberg, [Immigrant’s Access to Health Care in Texas: An Updated Landscape](#). Oct. 2016.