

LIFT the BAR Act to Help Immigrant Families in Massachusetts

MIRA



In 1996, Congress passed restrictive welfare and immigration legislation that created unnecessary barriers, including a five-year waiting-period—often referred to as “the five-year bar”—in some programs that delays access to critical benefits and services for many lawfully present immigrants across the nation. These programs are essential, especially in times of economic and public health crises when health disparities become more apparent.

Immigrants of all statuses in the Commonwealth contribute more than \$10 billion in federal taxes every year - taxes that help fund the programs they cannot currently access.¹ It is time to allow immigrant families access to these critical benefits.



The Lifting Immigrant Families Through Benefits Access Restoration (LIFT the BAR Act) (H.R. 4170 / S. 2038) would expand access to health, nutrition programs, housing assistance, and other services for lawfully present immigrants by:

- **Remove the arbitrary five-year bar eligibility restriction and expand access to necessary state and federal public benefits for lawfully present immigrants including:**
 - People who have had their green cards less than 5 years;
 - [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(DACA\)](#) and [Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\) holders](#); victims of crime, trafficking, and child abuse
- **Allow flexibility for states and localities to offer public assistance** to residents with their own funds to create more inclusive programs;
- **Repeal barriers to accessing benefits** for immigrants who have a sponsor;
- **Align eligibility for child nutrition programs** ensuring that all kids have access to school breakfast and lunch programs regardless of immigration status;
- **Provide that individuals who have access to Affordable Care Act health insurance** under current rules will not lose access to affordable coverage if they remain ineligible for Medicaid.
- **Expand federal housing programs** to include lawfully present immigrants, including survivors of domestic violence and victims of crime and trafficking



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Congress must act now to restore eligibility to federal public benefit programs that provide essential support to individuals and families. These programs are particularly crucial during times of economic and public health crises, and in working to address issues of race equity.

LIFT the BAR Act Would Have a Significant Impact on Massachusetts

The federal LIFT the BAR act would create a stronger Commonwealth by allowing access to benefits for 27,780+ TPS holders,² 4,340 DACA Recipients,³ and tens of thousands of green card holders.

While many children of immigrants are U.S. citizens and often eligible for benefits, children are less likely to be enrolled in benefits if their caregivers are not eligible for these benefits.⁴ Over 47,000 children in Massachusetts are impacted by the five-year bar and would benefit from expanding access.⁵ When more people can access basic services like healthcare, housing, and nutrition, it creates a stronger economy and healthier communities for all residents. Expanding programs like SNAP and Medicaid can reduce health care costs⁶ and boost the economy.⁷

MIRA Coalition strongly supports the federal LIFT the BAR Act ([H.R. 4170](#) / [S. 2038](#)). Support LIFT the BAR by contacting your member of congress [HERE](#) and ask that they co-sponsor ([H.R. 4170](#) / [S. 2038](#)) LIFT the BAR Act.



NOTE: THIS FACT SHEET WAS LAST UPDATED IN JULY 2024

1. <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-massachusetts>
2. Congressional Research Service (2024, May 28). Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/homesecc/RS20844.pdf>
3. https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/reports/active_daca_recipients_fy2024_q2.xlsx
4. <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/SNAP-Participation-Among-U.S.-Citizen-Children.pdf>
5. <https://www.nccp.org/immigration-profiles/>
6. <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/medi-cal-undocumented-adults/#text34>
7. <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2018/09/snap-supports-children-and-families.html>