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## **Licensures for lawfully present workforce will boost S.C. economy, help solve workforce shortages**

*New report shows potential of \$67.7 million additional output to South Carolina economy*

(GREENVILLE, S.C., April 4, 2024) – Allowing 5,500 legally authorized workers in South Carolina to be eligible for professional and occupational licenses could add up to \$67.7 million additional economic output to the state economy and help solve critical workforce shortages according to a new report commissioned by Hispanic Alliance and authored by Clemson University researchers.

“What the report shows is that allowing those with legal authorization to work to pursue licensure in their chosen field will benefit everyone in the state. If only 15% of eligible individuals entered the workforce, the potential economic output added to our economy is \$67.7 million, and around 947 workers could pursue higher paying jobs in licensed fields, filling gaps in industries with shortages like nursing and education,” said Andrew Skinner, director of public relations and development for Hispanic Alliance.

Current South Carolina law prevents those authorized to work through work from being eligible for more than 40 occupations and professions that require licensure. The report focuses on the lost economic impact from this policy barrier, specifically for recipients of authorization through Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

“My mother brought me to the United States when I was eight years old, and I am grateful for all she sacrificed to do so. My dream in school was to become a dental hygienist, but I found out while still in high school that wouldn’t be possible for me in South Carolina,” said Cesar Salas, development and public relations coordinator, Hispanic Alliance. “I then wanted to pursue a career in real estate, but that also requires a license in South Carolina. I am very fortunate to have the career I have now with the

Hispanic Alliance and am hopeful for change for the other 5,500 DACA recipients in South Carolina who are facing similar barriers."

The report was unveiled in March at an event organized by Hispanic Alliance, presented in partnership with Ten at the Top. During a panel discussion, State Representative Neal Collins (Republican – Greenville and Pickens Counties) discussed his longtime support of legislation that would allow professional and occupational licensure for DACA recipients.

When asked about the politics surrounding the policy, Collins said "I think a big part of the politics is helping people realize that it is not a question of whether they should be here. These individuals are lawfully present. They maintain all of the strict requirements to receive their authorization to work and renew their application every two years. We have some of these bright young people leaving South Carolina and going to other states - North Carolina for example - for higher education and to work in fields where we have critical shortages."

A question from the audience prompted the panel to comment on the investment that the state makes in DACA recipients through the K-12 public education system.

President of Spartanburg Methodist College Scott Cochran said, "From a financial and educational perspective, South Carolina taxpayers invest in these young people with their K-12 education but then prevents them from being employed to their full potential. A student could be valedictorian of their high school class, but the law says you cannot obtain a professional or occupational license in more than 40 different fields. To me, that does not make good fiscal sense. We want these young people to be employed to their full potential and be productive members of society."

The panel also discussed workforce shortages and how S.C. House Bill 3288 could help address critical needs in professions like teaching and nursing.

"Healthcare is our number one employer in Travelers Rest. If I could bring a healthcare employer just one more qualified nurse, that would make a huge difference for us from a workforce perspective," said Brandy Amidon, mayor of Travelers Rest and co-president of Brains.

The new report did not include data on education, and researchers note that including this data would likely lead to even higher economic impact for the state. Read the report and learn more at [hispanicalliancesc.org/allied4work](http://hispanicalliancesc.org/allied4work).

The Allied4Work event is the first in a three-part Allied4SC series. The second event Allied4Health, presented in partnership with Bon Secours St. Francis, will unveil research findings of healthcare needs in the Hispanic community and conversation surrounding the resources being developed to address quality of care, ethnic disparities, and advocate for health equity for all residents of South Carolina. Learn more about the Allied4SC series at [hispanicalliancesc.org/allied](https://hispanicalliancesc.org/allied).

## FAST FACTS

- If S.C. law was changed to allow DACA recipients to receive professional and occupational licensures, it is projected that:
  - 947 workers would become eligible to fill higher-paying jobs statewide
  - South Carolina would gain an additional economic output of up to \$67.7 million
  - South Carolina would gain up to \$749,000 in state income tax revenue
  - South Carolina would gain up to \$833,000 in state sales tax revenue
  - *Note: The above analysis does not include the education sector. Including education in the analysis, a field with critical shortage, would likely increase these estimates.*
  - *Source: The Lost Economic Impact of DACA Eligible Students in South Carolina (2024)*
- There are 42 categories of professions and occupations that require licensing through the South Carolina Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation. *Source: [South Carolina Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation](#)*
- South Carolina is facing an overall workforce shortage, with 43 workers for every 100 available jobs. *Source: [U.S. Chamber of Commerce, August 2023](#)*
- There is a projected shortage of 13,570 Registered Nurses in South Carolina by the year 2036. This is the seventh highest projected shortage in the country. *Source: [Bureau for Health Workforce](#)*
- South Carolina School Districts reported 1,613 vacant teacher positions at the beginning of the 2023-24 school year. *Source: [Center for Educator Recruitment Retention and Advancement](#)*

## ABOUT HISPANIC ALLIANCE

The Hispanic Alliance is the largest convener of ideas, individuals, and institutions collaborating to advance Hispanic communities across South Carolina. With the mission of fostering collaboration and connectivity among people, resources, and cultures to build thriving communities, the Hispanic Alliance envisions a vibrant and inclusive

community where everyone has access to opportunities for success and prosperity. The Hispanic Alliance is a nonpartisan organization that faithfully advocates for diversity, equality, acceptance, understanding, and embracing the American dream. For more information, visit [HispanicAllianceSC.com](http://HispanicAllianceSC.com).

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