

Iowa Restaurant Association Statement on Immigration

In an environment where there are few simple solutions, Iowa's restaurant owners have come together to make a simple statement – we support immigrants.

Immigrants are important to every aspect of our industry – as employees, co-workers, fellow business owners, customers, community members, neighbors and friends. Their positive cultural and economic impact on Iowa's hospitality industry cannot be overstated.

In many Iowa restaurants, more than two thirds of the workforce has immigrated to the United States. We actively seek immigrant candidates to work in our businesses because they make our industry better. We take every step possible to ensure that those we employ have entered the country legally and possess the appropriate documentation, but we also understand that even those whose legal status is in order are often impacted by worried over family members and friends who might not have the required documentation.

We daily hear, see, understand, and share the frustration and fear people have with the current dialogue throughout our state and the country. Our hearts go out to those who feel threatened and unappreciated by it. We will continue to work to turn the tide on this negativity and division and to support efforts to bring meaningful reform to a system that is currently not working for many.

The National Restaurant Association has long called for immigration reform at the federal level – promoting a clear path to legalization for America's 11 million undocumented workers, an accurate and reliable national employment verification system, and secure U.S. borders that promote legitimate travel and tourism. But the current political climate and level of discourse demands that as a state association we elevate our own voice and visibility on the issue as well.

We have and will continue to support and celebrate our immigrant employees and co-workers. We boldly add our voice to calls for reform including a path for legal worker status for the undocumented already living in our state. Restaurant are Iowa's second leading private sector employer. We strive to be an industry that rewards performance and promotes dignity for all employees – domestic and foreign born. We stand publicly by our immigrant employees.

Iowa's restaurant industry is one in which a non-English speaking immigrant can find his or her first job, even with those initial cultural barriers, end their careers as business owners themselves. That entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in our industry and our immigrant community. That spirit also demands that negative rhetoric be set aside and real solutions be adopted. The Iowa Restaurant Association and its leadership is committed to both.

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The Iowa Restaurant Association is an advocacy organization supporting Iowa's hospitality industry with educational and promotional programs across the state. www.restaurantiowa.com

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