

Director's Message



During these uncertain and challenging times, the Michigan Office for New Americans joins the Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan, the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, and the Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs in calling for an end to the recent actions and rhetoric targeting immigrants and other diverse groups, especially our Muslim American and Mexican American children and adults.

We cannot allow misinformation or indifference stoke fear. Together, we must all work diligently to help alleviate confusion and fear among our constituents. After all, these immigration and travel policies impact all of us, not just those from impacted countries.

We are proud to call Michigan our home, and appreciate that the vast majority of Michiganders who make our state a welcoming place for everyone. Together, we will work with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights and elected officials to ensure protection and inclusion for everyone in our communities.

We applaud Gov. Snyder's statement embracing our state's diversity and calling for respect and tolerance. In this spirit, we ask leaders in business, faith, government and community to stand with us to ensure a truly welcoming state.

There are countless ways we can take a stand, speak up, learn more and assist the newest Michiganders among us. Don't let indifference foster inaction.

Advocate for compassionate, comprehensive immigration reform with local, county, state and federal elected officials.

Ask them to commit to protecting our communities by advocating for, and passing anti-discriminatory policies.

Help the children. Ask your school leaders to teach, display and engage in conversations that promote multicultural understanding and help ensure a safe learning environment for our children.

Find out how you can help with health care and child care challenges that New American families have. Support the entrepreneurs. Patronize immigrant-owned businesses by shopping and dining in these wonderful places throughout the state. Learn more about the challenges immigrant business owners face with regulations, red tape and access to credit.

Ask your business leaders and chambers of commerce to support a pro-immigration climate and an inclusive culture that will expand Michigan's ability to attract a diverse and talented workforce.

Help New Americans learn the language and pursue citizenship. Participate in community English language learning and volunteer with ESL classes. Steer them to resources to help them become naturalized citizens.

Learn more about "brain waste" New Americans experience. (Read about the latest research in this newsletter.) Volunteer to help these college educated, professionals deal with barriers that deny them opportunities to practice their professions once they arrive in Michigan.

Encourage your faith leaders to practice interfaith dialogue and collaboration among their membership to nurture compassion and understanding.

Michigan is a place that values the diversity of its residents, cultures and faith traditions. Join us in protecting these values.

- Bing Goei

Inside This Issue:

- ◆ Commission and Director Spotlight (Page 2)
- ◆ MONA 2016 Year in Review (Page 3)
- ◆ ESL Grant winners (Page 3-4)
- ◆ Research Highlight (Page 5)
- ◆ Gallery (Page 7)

Commission Spotlight

Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan

The Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan (HLCOM) is composed of 11 commissioners lead by the Commission Chair Noel Garcia Jr. and Executive Director Felipe Lopez-Sustaita. The HLCOM is charged with advising the Governor, the Legislature, and the various State Offices regarding the coordination and administration of state programs serving Latinos. The Commission's mission is:

- Promoting the appointment of more Hispanics in positions of influence in the public and private sector.
- Increasing the economic growth and stability of Hispanics.
- Increasing awareness and support of Hispanic issues by local and state government officials.
- Promoting better education and academic achievement of Hispanics.
- Creating a participatory, empowered Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan.

The Commission strives to achieve an environment of social justice and economic parity for the Hispanic/Latino population of Michigan through commission meetings and hearing the concerns and suggestions of the community they serve. The HLCOM continues to make great strides in its outreach efforts by building on past successful initiatives such as a back to school backpack drive, [Hispanic Latino Newsletter](#) and the Hispanic Heritage month celebration dinner where six students received scholarships to help them further their education opportunities.

Director Spotlight

Felipe Lopez Sustaita, Hispanic Latino Commission



Felipe Lopez Sustaita is the youngest of eight siblings; he was born in Matehuala, San Luis Potosi, Mexico, and his family immigrated to the United States when he was very young. Felipe worked as a migrant farmworker in Texas, Tennessee, Georgia, and Michigan with his family until he started college in 2001. However, he has never stopped going back to the fields. Felipe continues to go back to work in the fields a few times a year to keep himself grounded as he still has two older brothers who continue working as farmworkers here in Michigan.

Felipe earned a bachelor's of arts in Criminal Justice in 2005 and a Master of Social Work in 2007; both degrees from Michigan State University. In May 2014 he completed his doctorate in Education with a specialization in Community College Leadership from Ferris State University. Felipe also has international education experience in Africa, Greece, Panama, Mexico and the Ukraine. Felipe is very passionate about higher education, as he knows that education is a pathway out of poverty. Felipe previously served as the LUCERO Program Coordinator and Academic Advisor at Lansing Community College for eight years. Felipe is now serving as the executive director of the Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan.

MONA 2016 Year in Review

Positive First-Year Outcomes for MONA's Michigan International Talent Solutions (MITS) Program

In its first year of operation, MITS exceeded its ambitious goals of getting New Americans in Michigan into professional jobs. Contract partner Upwardly Global handled front-end services including on-boarding and candidate prep. MITS Program Director Annie Fenton handles employer outreach and placement. MONA's Deputy Director Karen Phillippi, assists with connecting to employers. This is an "all hands on deck" effort with all staff within MONA working in consultation and with the active support of our immigrant partners who will help ensure MITS success. In FY2016, MITS on-boarded approximately 70 new job seekers into the program, and successfully placed more than 30 individuals in professional jobs. The average annual salary increase for these individuals was more than \$44,000.

Employers and job seekers can [Click here for more information on the MITS Program](#).

MONA Awards First-Ever Grants for Innovative Adult ESL

MONA received funding through the Governor's Office to provide its first-ever grants for innovative Adult ESL programs for the purpose of helping New Americans in Michigan with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) break language barriers to gain employment and contribute to Michigan's economy.

MONA issued a Request for Proposal requiring, among other criteria, that organizations had to collaborate with other community based organizations. Five, one-year grants of up to \$50,000 each were awarded in December 2016. The grants will support collaborative work among nontraditional partners to better meet the varied needs of Michigan's diverse immigrant community. The grant recipients are:

- ◆ Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)
- ◆ International Institute of Metro Detroit
- ◆ Literacy Center of West Michigan
- ◆ Michigan United
- ◆ Refugee Development Center in Lansing

The target audience of the ESL initiative includes Green cardholders, refugees, asylees, and asylum applicants. The program is not for temporary visitors or non-immigrants on temporary status in the U.S. Throughout the year, MONA will be receiving quarterly reports from each of the grant winners (the primary organizations) to monitor the progress of each program.

ESL Grant Winners



Gov. Snyder with representatives from the International Institute and the City of Detroit.



Gov. Snyder with representatives from the Literacy Center of West Michigan.



Gov. Snyder with representatives from the Lansing Refugee Department.



Gov. Snyder with representatives from Michigan United.



Gov. Snyder with representatives from Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services.

Research Highlight

UNTAPPED TALENT: Costs of Brain Waste Among Highly Skilled Immigrants in the United States

Michigan along with the rest of the nation is a top destination for the world's best and brightest, but we are falling short on fully tapping the skills and training of these newcomers. It's resulting in significant economic loss in foregone earning and taxes. The findings of this report offers the first-ever economic costs of underemployment or "brain waste" of the college-educated immigrant population in the U.S – which is concerning because they are making up an ever greater share of new arrivals. Almost half – 50 percent- of immigrant adults entering the U.S. between 2011-2015 held a bachelor's degree or more. That's up sharply from 27 percent in 1990 and 33 percent arriving before the 2007-2009 recession. One in four of the 7.6 million college-educated immigrants (nearly 2 million) in the U.S. during 2009-2013 experienced skill underutilization, that is, they were either working in low-skilled jobs or were unemployed.

The report studies immigrant skill underutilization among seven states with findings that "brain waste" varies by state. Florida had the highest rate of immigrant brain waste (32 percent) among the states examined, while Michigan and Ohio had the lowest (20-21 percent). [Fact](#) sheets are provided for California, Florida, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Texas, and Washington State. The report and state fact sheets can be downloaded at: <http://bit.ly/MPIUntappedTalent>

Highly Skilled Immigrants in Michigan (2009-2013) Fact Sheet Highlights

- Of 144,000 immigrants in Michigan, 29,000 were in low-skilled jobs or unemployed (20 percent); compared to 25 percent nationwide.
- Highly skilled immigrants working in low-skilled jobs amounted to about **\$510.2 million** in lost annual wages (a conservative estimate).
- As a result, Michigan lost **\$48.6 million** in unrealized state and local taxes (not to mention an uncalculated loss resulting from their lower disposable incomes to spend and invest.)
- They are much more likely to have a university degree than U.S.-born adults (41 percent versus 26 percent).
- The majority of them were English proficient (74 percent of foreign-educated and 91 percent of U.S. educated higher than the national average); exceeding the national level at 67 percent and 86 percent respectively).
- Fifty-three percent were naturalized U.S. citizens; 27 percent were legal permanent residents, 13 percent were temporary visa holders, and eight percent were unauthorized immigrants.
- Fifty-eight percent (83,000) were foreign educated (compared to 52 percent nationally); and 42 percent (62,000) obtained their degrees in the U.S.
- Those who were foreign-educated were more likely to be either underemployed or unemployed (22 percent).
- Nearly 90 percent are Asian and White, both U.S. and foreign-educated.
- The rate of brain waste at 20 percent, was the same among highly skilled immigrants and their U.S. born counterparts in Michigan.
- They were more likely to experience brain waste if they had limited English skills, had only a bachelor's degree, and were Hispanic or Black.
- Asian immigrants had the lowest level of brain waste at 16 percent.

Highly Skilled Immigrants in Michigan (2009-2013) Fact Sheet Highlights Continued

Barriers immigrants face toward gaining employment at their skill level:

- Difficulty getting their foreign credentials recognized;
- Unfamiliarity with the U.S. labor market;
- Employers' negative perceptions of the quality of their foreign education and work experience;
- Limited English skills; and
- A shortage of education programs to make up skill deficits.

The report advocates for continued efforts to address these barriers that immigrants, especially those who are foreign-educated, face in Michigan's labor market. The state must continue to develop policies that promote recognition of foreign credentials, make licensing requirements more transparent and expand access to courses in professional English that will provide a substantial return on public investment.

Michigan is recognized for taking steps in the right direction. Namely, the MITS program and LARA's skilled licensing guides. Michigan now has more than 40 skilled immigrant licensing guides online identifying educational and experience credentialing requirements for various occupations. Currently, Michigan has more license guides available than any other state in the nation.

The report was issued by the Migration Policy Institute, New American Economy, and World Education Services (WES) in December 2016.

Gallery



Mission

To help grow Michigan's economy by attracting global talent to our state and promote the skills, energy, and entrepreneurial spirit of our immigrant communities.



Governor Snyder with representatives from Michigan's refugee resettlement agencies.

MONA was honored to have been selected to participate in the first National Skills & Credentialing convening held at the White House in June 2016. MONA's team included members from the Governor's Office, LARA and the WDA.



www.michigan.gov/mona



www.michigan.gov/lara

Submissions

We encourage you to submit articles, information, photos, and comments to us – your input is important. If you would like to submit articles for the MONA News Connection, you may submit them via e-mail to NewAmericans@michigan.gov.

For additional information about the Michigan Office for New Americans, go to www.michigan.gov/mona

LARA is an equal opportunity employer/program.