

What States & Local Governments Can Do to Support Immigrants' Financial Stability:

ENERGY, UTILITIES & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Current aggressive federal immigration enforcement has created massive disruption throughout the U.S. and significant financial hardship in impacted communities.

Racial profiling by immigration officials means Black and Latino communities are particularly harmed.

People in impacted communities are reasonably concerned that any information they provide in connection with accessing financial services or in interactions with federal, state, or local government could be used to target them for detention and deportation, regardless of immigration status. Immigration officials' access to and use of an unprecedented array of information drives many immigrants out of the formal banking sector and leaves immigrant families exposed to abuse and predation by fringe financial service providers. Mainstream financial service providers may also be emboldened to discriminate against immigrants by the federal government's refusal to enforce fair lending and fair housing statutes. In addition, fear of being in public spaces can lead immigrants to miss court hearings and not assert their rights in debt collection, evictions, and other legal proceedings. Below are ways that states, counties, and local governments can help protect immigrants, their families, and communities from financial exploitation and other consumer abuses.

The more comprehensive **What States & Local Governments Can Do to Support Immigrants' Financial Stability** issue brief contains NCLC's full list of recommendations. This document highlights the recommendations related to energy, utilities, and telecommunications.

600%

The Trump Administration has increased the use of **"at-large" arrests in U.S. communities by 600%**, putting families at financial risk when wage earners are arrested.



According to **a Nov. 2025 report**, 50% of immigrants report difficulty paying for essentials — up from 30% in 2023 — and 50% say that it's increasingly difficult for them to earn a living.

Bolster Anti-Discrimination Protections for Immigrants

CONSUMER PROBLEMS

Financial assistance programs offered by private and public institutions, such as hospitals, utility and telecommunications providers, and social services, can exclude people with certain immigration statuses.

STATE SOLUTIONS

Prohibit creditors, social service providers, and utility and telecommunications providers receiving state funding from discriminating against people with certain immigration statuses in applications for financial assistance.

Protect Immigrant Consumer Data

CONSUMER PROBLEMS

Consumer data — including data shared with financial services companies, landlords, social services, colleges and universities, and utility companies — can be used to target people for immigration enforcement.

STATE SOLUTIONS

Where possible, prohibit collecting information about a person's immigration status. Prohibit sharing personally identifiable data that includes or can be linked to immigration status information. (E.g., [MD Data Privacy Act.](#))

Ensure Immigrants Can Access Courts and Counsel

CONSUMER PROBLEMS

Some immigrants are detained in state prisons or local jails. Costly phone calls impede their access to counsel before they may be transferred or deported.

STATE SOLUTIONS

Provide access to free communications to people — including immigrants — detained in state and local correctional facilities.

Require Language Access for Public Agencies and Financial Transactions

CONSUMER PROBLEMS

Immigrants receiving notice from state or local government agencies or the courts may not be aware of their rights described in the notice.

STATE SOLUTIONS

Require agencies to provide documents to all recipients in the top two languages used in the jurisdiction, provide them in other top languages upon request, and broadly offer oral interpretation. ([NCLC report](#))

Immigrants seeking loans or facing debt collection may require in-language information to understand the transaction or vindicate their rights.

Require lenders and debt collectors to provide bilingual Spanish-English key notices to all, provide them in other top languages upon request, and broadly offer oral interpretation.

Ensure Immigrant Access to Financial Assistance and Social Services

CONSUMER PROBLEMS

STATE SOLUTIONS

Immigrants are wary of going to social services offices for financial assistance because they fear these locations will be targeted by immigration officials.

Permit remote applications and remote appearances for appointments. Restrict access to city, county, and/or state property by immigration officers. ([Vera report](#))

Federal financial assistance programs, including for utility assistance (LIHEAP) and student loans, exclude people with certain immigration statuses.

Expand access to critical utility bill assistance through state supplemental LIHEAP authorization to make LIHEAP available to all customers without regard to immigration status (e.g., [305 ILCS 20/20](#)).

Loss of income — because wage earners are detained or because families fear leaving their homes — leads households to struggle to pay mortgages, property taxes, student loans, auto loans, and other obligations, and harms credit records.

Enhance financial assistance programs, including utility assistance and rental assistance. Create affordable payment plans for tax bills based on household income that waive past due interest. Allow [temporary, interest-free deferral of taxes owed](#).

To speak to an expert about any of these problems or solutions, please contact Jen Bosco, jbosco@nclc.org.

JULY 2026

The nonprofit National Consumer Law Center® (NCLC®) works for economic justice for low-income and other disadvantaged people in the U.S. through policy analysis and advocacy, publications, litigation, and training.

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