

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
BEFORE THE SENATE STATE, VETERANS, & MILITARY AFFAIRS
ON SB 21-199: REMOVING BARRIERS TO CERTAIN OPPORTUNITIES
April 13, 2021
Lindsey Vigoda, Colorado Director
Small Business Majority**

Thank you Chairwoman Gonzales, Vice Chair Coleman, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lindsey Vigoda and I'm the Colorado Director for Small Business Majority, a small business organization with offices nationwide, including here in Colorado. Our mission is to empower America's diverse entrepreneurs to build a thriving and equitable economy. I am here to express our support for SB 21-199, which would remove barriers to certain public opportunities, such as professional and business licenses, for undocumented entrepreneurs in Colorado.

Through our work with the small business community and partner organizations here in Colorado, we know that our state is home to more than 32,000 immigrant small businesses, which employ more than 100,000 Coloradans. These entrepreneurs are key drivers of our economic success; however, existing laws are preventing undocumented, immigrant business owners from establishing legal entities because they must verify their legal status when applying for professional and commercial licenses. This inefficient requirement hinders their ability to fully participate in our local communities and provide for their families, which in turn will impact our economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

What's more, the state statute creates workforce challenges for Colorado small businesses, as it prevents undocumented employees from holding occupational licenses. It's important to note that an estimated 37% of undocumented immigrants are reporting employment challenges, at the same time that Colorado businesses are experiencing skilled workforce shortages.

The proposed legislation would address these challenges by eliminating the requirement that individuals must verify their legal presence when applying for business and professional licenses. This would allow undocumented immigrants to openly participate in our economy at a critical time when thousands of businesses are on the verge of permanent closure. These entrepreneurs have been excluded from accessing federal relief funding during the pandemic since they have been unable to access these licenses, which means they haven't received adequate support and funding when they need it most.

Additionally, passing this legislation is not just about ensuring these entrepreneurs may operate legally, it's about helping them stabilize their businesses and retain jobs. Removing these barriers will pave the way for Colorado immigrant businesses to thrive and lead more stable lives and participate in programs that they already contribute to in the form of tax dollars.

I strongly encourage you to remove these barriers and support our dynamic, immigrant small business community. Our state needs everyone to work together to create and retain jobs, support their families and contribute to our local economies. Your vote today will be the first step to accelerating our economic growth and recovery.

Thank you,
Lindsey Vigoda
Colorado Director, Small Business Majority