



The National Association for Multicultural Education

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Position Statement

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The National Association for Multicultural Education expresses its deep opposition to recently passed state laws designed to drive out undocumented immigrants. We call for repeal of laws that punish immigrant children and their families, and for a campaign to educate U.S. citizens about the rights and contributions of immigrants, and about U.S. policies that have prompted people to come to the U.S. seeking work.

Georgia's HB87, enacted in April 2011, requires private employers to verify the immigration status of employees, and to hire only documented residents. Alabama's HB56, enacted in June 2011, took Georgia's law several steps further. It prohibits undocumented immigrants from receiving any public benefits at either the state or local level. It requires every P-12 public school to report the immigration status of every student and every student's parents, although it does not prohibit school attendance of undocumented students. Further, HB56 bars undocumented immigrants from attending public colleges or universities. Additional requirements are designed to discourage undocumented immigrants from being in Alabama. Among other things, in addition to prohibiting hiring undocumented immigrants, the law requires police to attempt to determine the immigration status of anyone they stop, and it prohibits landlords from renting to undocumented immigrants.

The Alabama law has created a hostile climate for Latino students, whether documented or not. The Southern Poverty Law Center, which implemented a hotline for people concerned about the law, reports between September and mid-November, receiving nearly 4,000 calls from terrified Latino immigrants – undocumented and documented alike. Children who are citizens are afraid to go to school, fearing their parents will be deported. Latino students (documented or not) are being bullied by classmates, and harassed by teachers who question their immigration status. Undocumented older students who came to the U.S. as very young children worry that they will not be able to continue their education regardless of the merits of their academic record. No one should have to fear going to school on the basis of identity, but this law is creating such fear.

We are also concerned that the laws in both states rest on inaccurate but largely uncorrected assumptions: 1) that undocumented immigrants do not pay taxes (at the very least, all immigrants pay sales tax on purchases in the U.S.); 2) that they contribute nothing (an assumption that ignores immigrant labor for very low wages); and 3) that the U.S. bears no complicity in the reasons why people are undergo major hardship to find work in the U.S. What most U.S. citizens do not realize is that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has enabled the U.S. to flood Mexico with cheap, subsidized produce that has shut down many Mexican farms and displaced millions of rural Mexican farmers, while turning profits for large agricultural corporations.

Because of the hostile education climate these laws create, and the inaccurate assumptions on which many people support them, we call for their repeal, and for an education campaign about the roots of immigration.

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