



GREAT LAKES METRO CHAMBERS COALITION

February 13, 2018

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chairman, Committee on Finance
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Flake
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hatch and Senator Flake:

On behalf of the Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition (GLMCC) – a collective of chambers of commerce across the Great Lakes region – we write in support of the Immigration Innovation Act of 2018 (S. 2344), which would significantly increase the number of H-1B visas for high-skilled workers.

The Great Lakes Region is one of the world's most important economic engines, covering all or parts of twelve states and two Canadian provinces. If our region was a nation, it would be the third largest economy in the world with a combined gross domestic product of more than \$5.7 trillion powered by one of the most dynamic advanced manufacturing sectors in the world.

In October, GLMCC and the New American Economy (NAE) produced a study to highlight the role immigrants play in the Great Lakes regional economy. The study concluded that an increase in immigrant populations in the Great Lakes region has led to a rebound in the manufacturing industry, fast growth in the healthcare sector, and the creation of nearly 250,000 working-class jobs. The report, *New Americans and a New Direction: The Role of Immigrants in Reviving the Great Lakes Region* found:

- **Immigration fuels population growth in the Great Lakes region.** Immigrants accounted for half of regional population growth between 2000 and 2015 and offset population decline in nine out of the top 25 metros in the region. The Detroit and Pittsburgh metro areas, for instance, would have shrunk by more than 200,000 and 100,000 people, respectively, if not for the arrival of immigrants.
- **Immigrants have helped revive the manufacturing industry.** Despite popular perception, manufacturing has begun a robust rebound in the Great Lakes region, adding more than 250,000 working-class jobs between 2010 and 2015, the majority of which—more than 92 percent—were filled by U.S.-born workers. This is possible, in part, because immigrants fill the higher skilled jobs that allow companies to stay local, as opposed to moving offshore. Foreign-born workers made up one out of every seven manufacturing engineers in 2015.

- **Immigrants' spending power has helped revitalize local businesses.** Immigrants punch above their weight when it comes to their power as consumers. In 2015, they held close to \$130 billion in spending power, or 8.2 percent of the region's total, although they represented just 7.3 percent of the area's overall population. Robust consumer spending by immigrants supports local business owners and keeps local economic corridors vibrant.

Because of the important role that high-skilled immigrants play in bolstering the economic impact of the Great Lakes region, we support the Immigration Innovation Act.

The Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition leadership will be in Washington on March 14 and 15. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how we might assist in garnering more support for your legislation. Laurie Purpuro from K&L Gates, our DC counsel, will contact your office separately to arrange a meeting.

Thank you for your leadership on expanding the H-1B visa program.

Sincerely,



Brandon Mendoza
GLMCC Co-Chair
Govt Affairs Manager
Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce



Marty McGann
GLMCC Co-Chair
Sr. Vice President for Advocacy
Greater Cleveland Partnership