

March 13, 2023

*2023 Senate Bill 2142
Chairman Headland
Finance and Taxation Committee*

Chairman Headland and Members of the Finance and Taxation Committee, my name is Holly Triska-Dally, I serve as the State Refugee Coordinator for the ND Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of my testimony is to provide a national overview of three things 1) shifting demographics in the United States, 2) the underutilization of immigrant talent, and 3) the Office of New Americans (ONA) State network.

Demographic Shift:

The Baby Boomers, the largest ever generation, 73 million people born following WWII and 1964 are reaching retirement age. They comprise the bulk of all available skilled labor and their absence is hugely impactful in numerical terms. A surge in Baby Boomer retirements occurred during the pandemic, bringing the total for retired Baby Boomers to 30 million. By 2030, all Baby Boomers will be age 65 or older¹.

The decline in birth rates that began in the 1960s now has decades of steam behind it. In 1965 the average woman had 3.5 children, today she has 1.6 children. We are well below a replacement birthrate of 2.1. Yesterday's fewer children leads to today's few young workers leads to tomorrow's few mature workers.²

Many strategies should be taken to increase the Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate. However, based on increased retirees and decreased births it is hard to envision a workforce solution that does not involve immigration.

Underutilization of Immigrant Talent:

According to a recent study published by the Migration Policy Institute, more than 2 million college-educated immigrants are either unemployed or underemployed, representing 17% of the total college educated workforce in the U.S.³ Unemployment and underemployment of this group results in approximately \$39.4 billion in foregone earnings and \$10.2 billion in unrealized tax revenues annually. The Pew Research Center projects that by 2065 immigrants and their children will make up 36% of the total U.S. population and will account for 88% of population growth.⁴ An estimated 47.4% of the foreign-born population who arrived in the United States from 2010 to 2019 had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 36.3% of native-born Americans.⁵ More than 5.3 million students, or nearly 30

¹ [By 2030, All Baby Boomers Will Be Age 65 or Older \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/2022/c22-08.html)

² Zeihan, Peter, 2022, The End of the World is Just the Beginning, Section I: History Speeds Up, HarpersCollins Publishers

³ [Research: Leaving Money on the Table: The Persiste... | migrationpolicy.org](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/leaving-money-on-the-table-the-persiste)

⁴ [Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to U.S. | Pew Research Center](https://www.pewresearch.org/immigration/2022/05/11/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s/)

⁵ [U.S. Census Bureau Releases New Educational Attainment Data](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/2022/c22-08.html)