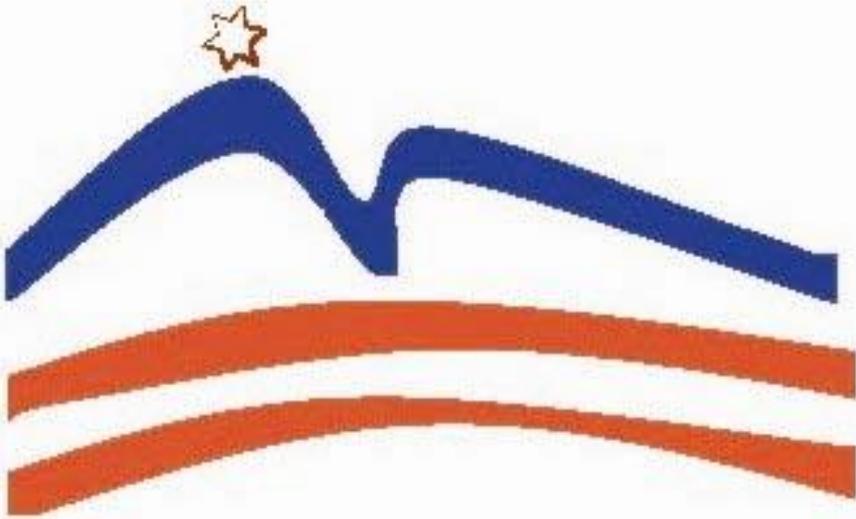


Berkshire Immigrant Center

www.berkshireic.com



*Serving the many
faces of
Berkshire County*

The background of the top two-thirds of the image is a close-up, slightly blurred view of the American flag. The stars and stripes are visible, with the blue field of stars on the left and the red and white stripes on the right. The flag appears to be draped or waving, creating a sense of movement.

Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life.
- John F. Kennedy

“Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were America”
- Oscar Handlin

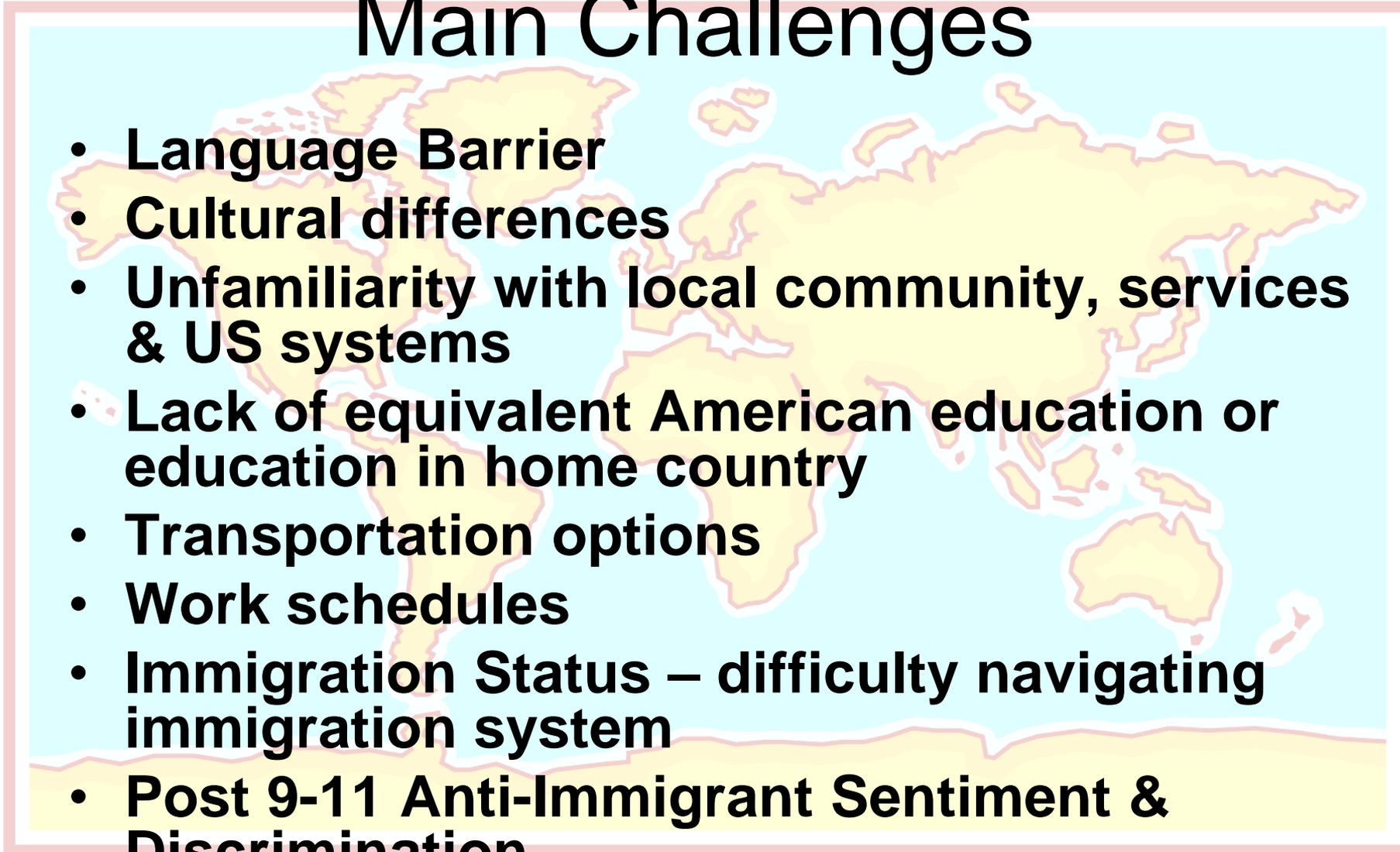
History

The Berkshire Immigrant Center (BIC) was founded by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires in 1997 as part of a statewide campaign to encourage immigrants to apply for citizenship.

Over the past thirteen years the Center has evolved into an office of immigrant services in order to address the wider needs of the local immigrant and refugee population.

The Center has become a safe place for immigrants to turn to for advice and support on legal, employment, housing, social services and health care issues.

Main Challenges



- **Language Barrier**
- **Cultural differences**
- **Unfamiliarity with local community, services & US systems**
- **Lack of equivalent American education or education in home country**
- **Transportation options**
- **Work schedules**
- **Immigration Status – difficulty navigating immigration system**
- **Post 9-11 Anti-Immigrant Sentiment & Discrimination**

Our Services

BIC provides advice, information, advocacy, referral and support for immigrants on issues related to immigration, employment, citizenship, housing and social services.



- **Welcoming Newcomers**
- **Immigration Counseling and Support**
- **Community Education and Outreach**

Our Local Immigrant Community

- 12,000 immigrants residing in Berkshire County.
 - 60% Latino
 - 12% African
 - 7% Eastern European
 - 4% Asian Pacific
 - 4% European
 - 4% Indian
 - 9% Other
-
- 2nd fastest growing Latino population in the state next to Chicopee



Where do our clients come from?

In 2012, we served a total of 756 individuals from 71 different countries. The following list shows the numbers and countries of origin of these clients:

USA	169	POLAND	7	UKRAINE	3	EGYPT	1
EL SALVADOR	67	PUERTO RICO	7	COSTA RICA	2	ESTONIA	1
COLOMBIA	61	SRI LANKA	7	INDONESIA	2	ETHIOPIA	1
ECUADOR	60	ARGENTINA	5	ISRAEL	2	GUINEA	1
MEXICO	48	JAMAICA	5	LATVIA	2	HONG KONG	1
GHANA	35	TURKEY	5	LIBERIA	2	HUNGARY	1
PERU	34	ALBANIA	4	NICARAGUA	2	IRAN	1
INDIA	26	BENIN	4	PAKISTAN	2	LITHUANIA	1
DOMINIC REPUBLIC	24	CHINA	4	VIETNAM	2	MOLDOVA	1
BRAZIL	21	ITALY	4	AFGANISTAN	1	NEPAL	1
IVORY COAST	17	NIGERIA	4	BANGLADESH	1	NEW ZEALAND	1
RUSSIA	15	PHILIPPINES	4	BELARUS	1	NORWAY	1
HONDURAS	11	FRANCE	3	BELIZE	1	SOUTH AFRICA	1
GREAT BRITAIN	10	GERMANY	3	BOLIVIA	1	TADJIKISTAN	1
GUATEMALA	10	MALAYSIA	3	BULGARIA	1	URUGUAY	1
CANADA	9	PDR CONGO	3	CHILE	1	UZBEKISTAN	1
HAITI	8	ROMANIA	3	CUBA	1	VENEZUELA	1
THAILAND	8	TANZANIA	3	CZECH REPUBLIC	1		

Myths about Immigrants Today

- Immigrants take away jobs from other Americans.
- Immigrants are a drain on US economy or treasury.
- Immigrants aren't really interested in becoming part of American society.
- Immigrants are more prone to criminality than are native-born.
- Most immigrants are undocumented***

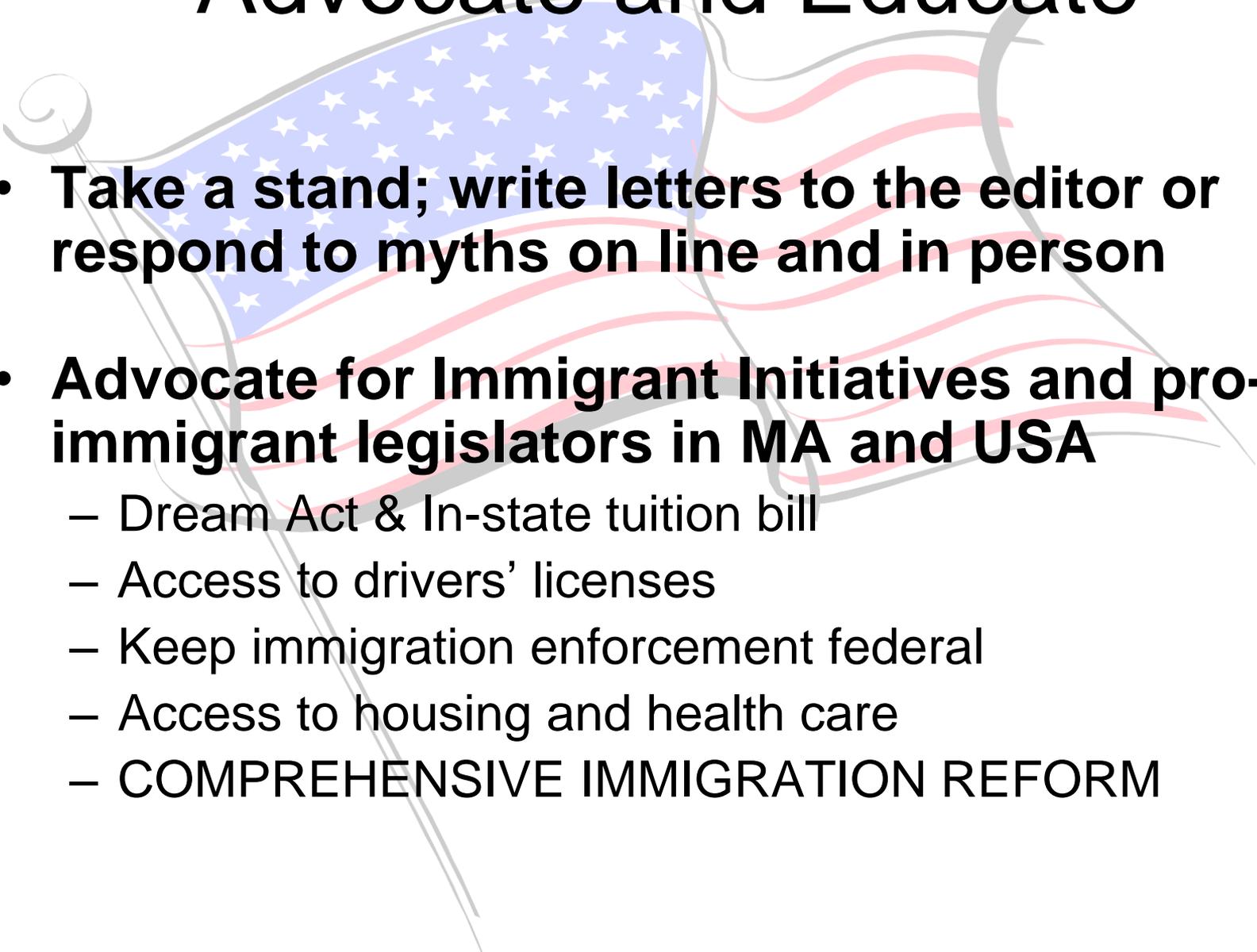
The Truth about Immigrants in the U.S., Massachusetts, & Berkshire County

- Nearly one out of every four people in the United States in 2008 was either an immigrant or the child of an immigrant.
- Immigrants who are naturalized U.S. citizens (and entitled to vote) accounted for 5 percent of the total U.S. population in 2008.
- Between 2000 and 2004, 511 % of employment growth in Massachusetts was due to new immigrants
- Immigrants make up 14% of the population and 17% of the Massachusetts labor force
- The population of Massachusetts and Berkshire County is declining. New immigrants moving into this area help to stimulate our economy.
- Berkshire County has shown a shrinking labor force over the past few years and is dependent on immigrant labor to fill jobs.
- Immigrants contribute enormously to the local culture and business atmosphere of Berkshire County as evidenced by a growing influx of ethnic events and immigrant-owned restaurants and businesses
- Immigrants are extremely hard working often taking on 2-3 jobs to support family members both in the U.S. and abroad

The Truth about Immigrants in Massachusetts & Berkshire County (cont.)

- Immigrants pay taxes: The typical immigrant and his or her descendants pay an estimated \$80,000 more in taxes than they will receive in benefits over their lifetimes. All immigrants pay sales, property, and income taxes. Undocumented immigrants can pay state and federal taxes using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) issued by the Internal Revenue Service. Social Security funds contributed by undocumented immigrants amount to nearly \$6 billion annually.
- Numerous studies by independent researchers and government commissions over the past 100 years repeatedly and consistently have found that immigrants are **less likely to commit crimes or to be behind bars than are the native-born.**
- Immigrants in every ethnic group in the United States have lower rates of crime and imprisonment than do the native-born. This is true for all immigrant groups -- including the Mexicans, Salvadorans and Guatemalans - who comprise most of the undocumented immigrants in the country.
- Undocumented immigrants make up less than five percent of the total number of immigrants in Massachusetts
- There are 3 million US citizen children with one or both parents undocumented
- There are 14 million people in mixed status families

Advocate and Educate

A stylized graphic of the American flag, featuring a blue field with white stars and red and white stripes, rendered in a wavy, artistic style. The graphic is positioned behind the text on the slide.

- **Take a stand; write letters to the editor or respond to myths on line and in person**
- **Advocate for Immigrant Initiatives and pro-immigrant legislators in MA and USA**
 - Dream Act & In-state tuition bill
 - Access to drivers' licenses
 - Keep immigration enforcement federal
 - Access to housing and health care
 - COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

Immigrant Advocacy

- National Immigration Forum
- National Immigration Law Center
- Immigration Policy Center
- Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (and members)
- Welcoming America
- Immigration Advocates Network