



Midwestern groups talk immigration and economy in Detroit conference: 'To immigrate is entrepreneurial'



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DETROIT, MI -- Groups that work to help immigration drive economic activity in seven different Midwestern cities are meeting in Detroit on Thursday to form a regional network of support organizations.

Global Detroit, the group hosting the gathering, offers lending programs and entrepreneurship training for immigrants and works to keep international students in the U.S. after graduation.

Similar organizations from Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Indianapolis, and Lansing are being linked to form a network they call Global Great Lakes.

"Immigrants have created millions of jobs. They'll create millions more if we let them," said Ohio immigration attorney Richard Herman, one of the first speakers Thursday morning in the conference being held at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law.

"To immigrate is entrepreneurial. It's risk taking. Its like jumping out of an airplane, not knowing if that parachute is going to open up."

Former state Rep. Steve Tobocman, now head of Global Detroit, is behind the gathering.

"We want to create culture change by fostering immigrant economic development strategies to help internationalize the region and capitalize on immigration as an economic catalyst," Tobocman said.

The groups will be sharing ideas and best practices all day.

Peter Gonzales, director of the Welcoming Center of New Pennsylvanians, said about 38 percent of the immigrants who seek services from the group hold college degrees.

"It's not uncommon for a doctor from Afghanistan or a dentist from Indonesia... to be sitting in our office trying to connect with an opportunity to work again in the United States," Gonzales said.

He shared a number of programs in place in Pennsylvania, like providing online learning resources to help incoming immigrants prepare for life in the U.S. before they arrive.

More information on the conference [here](#).

More: [Keeping international students in U.S. key to boosting economy, advocates say in Detroit gathering of Midwestern groups](#)

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