

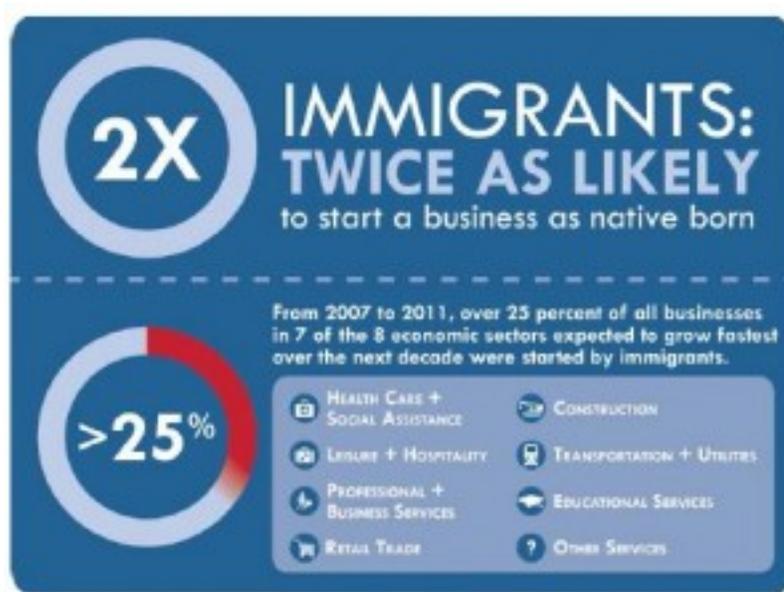


Immigration: bringing cultural vitality and economic growth to Buffalo Niagara

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With immigration hotly debated in the headlines, I feel it's important to thoughtfully examine and recognize the economic impacts of the foreign-born, as immigration is an integral part of our country and city's past, present and future.



In early June, in collaboration with the **International Institute of Buffalo**, we hosted Steve Tobocman (Executive Director of **Global Detroit**) and Melissa Bertolo (Program Coordinator of **Welcome Dayton**) for a conversation on how their cities are working to **welcome and support immigrants** as part of their economic development strategies.

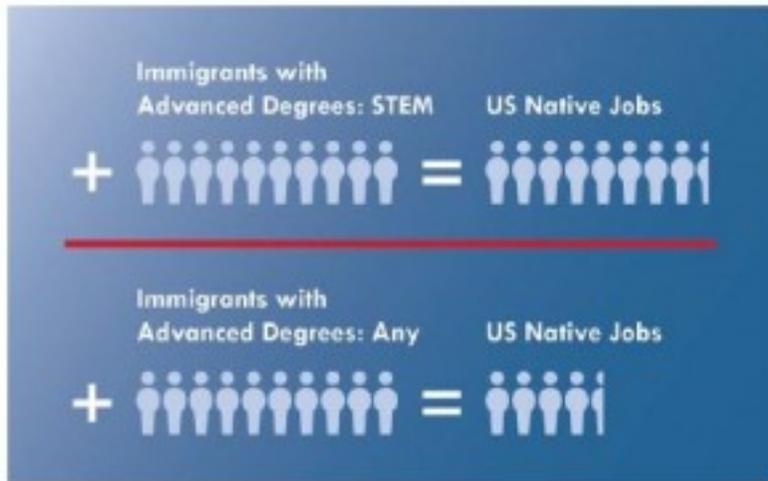
After spending time with them, I was struck by the fact that immigrants and refugees truly hold unparalleled potential for the Buffalo Niagara region.

We've heard from our members that the region's immigrants are an asset to their labor force, bringing both soft and technical skills to their facilities. Moreover, our members are looking to capitalize on the region's growing foreign born student population as a highly skilled talent pipeline.

I've seen more and more the riches in cultural vitality that immigrants bring to Buffalo: a renewed vibrancy along the Grant Street corridor spurred by foreign-born entrepreneurs, delicious restaurants in neighborhoods across the region, and events like **Buffalo without Borders** and **Taste of Diversity** which embrace the city's evolving

multiculturalism.

These observations, *in conjunction with employers' clamor for sensible immigration policies*, clearly address the need for a reliable and legal supply of foreign born talent and have led to me to think about immigration reform less of a hot button political issue and more as an economic development driver.



Wanting more evidence to underpin this theory, I turned to the International Economic Development Council's recent research paper, "**The Economic Development Impacts of Immigration**" which underlines everything I've been seeing and hearing:

- Immigrants supplement the

workforce where it is most needed

- Immigrants create jobs through entrepreneurship, innovation and investment
- As the regional chamber of commerce, we have been working with our partners at the **U.S. Chamber of Commerce** and the **Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition** to address this issue at the federal level, while conversing with local partners about how our region can better leverage our burgeoning foreign born population.

Please join me as we continue the conversation on 8 a.m. on Wednesday, July 30 as I host expert panelists Jeff Lungren, Director of Congressional and Public Affairs at the **U.S. Chamber of Commerce**, and Eva Hassett of the **International Institute of Buffalo**, to discuss the business case on immigration reform and why Buffalo Niagara needs to Washington D.C. to act!