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Non-Profit Says Key Group is Missing From Immigration Reform Debate

***Congress urged to include support for vastly under-employed skilled legal immigrants;
new report shows broad economic benefit of tapping global talent already in the U.S.***

San Francisco, CA, April 25, 2013 –A national non-profit organization that helps foreign-educated legal immigrants gain skill-appropriate jobs is urging Congress to include specific support for this group in the immigration reform legislation now being considered. Upwardly Global, which provides job-search and placement support to skilled immigrants authorized to work in the U.S., noted the absence of this population in the reform bill unveiled last week.

“Much of the conversation about Comprehensive Immigration Reform has focused on creating pathways to citizenship or the future flows of immigrants into the country,” said Nikki Cicerani, executive director of Upwardly Global. “These issues are important, but we’re missing one critical group that is already here but consistently working in low-wage jobs way below its level of education and experience, namely skilled legal immigrants who have received their college degrees outside the U.S. If we really are talking about truly comprehensive immigration reform, support for this group needs to be included in the legislation.”

According to immigration experts, foreign-educated immigrants are much more likely to be unemployed or under-employed than their U.S.-educated counterparts; currently there are at least 1.8 million skilled immigrants in the U.S. who fall in this category. Organizations such as Upwardly Global help these immigrants overcome the cultural and practical obstacles to finding jobs in their professional field – helping with skills such as how to write a cover letter and resume, identify prospective employers, and interview for a job.

“We hear literally hundreds of stories every year of clients working in jobs that don’t utilize their training – an engineer packing boxes, a doctor as a hot dog vendor, a chemist working as a waitress, an IT expert delivering pizza,” said Cicerani. “Keeping these individuals in lower-skilled jobs is a waste of needed talent, but it’s also hurting our overall economy.”

Economic benefits

Cicerani points out that moving skilled immigrants into jobs related to their professions not only benefits the immigrants themselves and their families, but the nation as well. “As immigrants find jobs in their own field, they raise their own salaries exponentially and create significant economic gains above and beyond this immediate increase,” she noted.

Upwardly Global was able to quantify these benefits when it [analyzed](#) a cohort of 561 clients who joined its program in 2010 or 2011. Reviewing these clients’ employment data beginning in November 2012, the organization found that of the more than 87 percent who reported being

employed, almost all had obtained new and more lucrative jobs that were more closely related to their professional field. The new jobs and higher salaries led to a significant increase in federal tax revenue and in consumer spending by the group, as well as to a likely increase in additional jobs created by the clients' new employment – either indirectly to support the clients (*e.g.*, secretary) or through induced jobs generated by their increased spending power (*e.g.*, salesperson).

Upwardly Global's analysis estimated:

- An aggregate salary increase from about \$1.98 million to \$19.8 million over a year's time – more than a 900 percent increase.
- An increase of approximately \$1.8 million in federal income tax on an annual basis from these clients alone.
- An increase in consumer spending on an annual basis of between \$16.2 million and \$17.1 million by these clients alone.
- An estimated 368 newly created indirect jobs.
- An estimated 311 newly created induced jobs.

Talent Shortage

Upwardly Global says that another way in which skilled immigrants benefit the U.S. is that they often excel in areas where the U.S. is suffering significant talent shortages. According to a 2012 national survey by ManpowerGroup, employers are having trouble hiring for a host of skilled jobs, with the top five being skilled trades, engineering, IT, sales representatives, and accounting and finance.

“The clients we're helping are to a large degree taking positions that employers have had great difficulty in filling,” said Cicerani. “When we look at a profile of the clients we've helped place, fully 63 percent of them fall in these top five categories or other hard-to-fill jobs in health care, education, science and math.”

Legislative effort

Upwardly Global, in partnership with an umbrella organization focused on skilled immigrant integration, IMPRINT, is now asking Congress to include language in the Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill that would help integrate foreign-educated legal immigrants into the U.S. economy. This assistance would include support to help them overcome the practical hurdles of securing jobs in this country.

“These immigrants arrive with the experience they need to succeed,” Cicerani said. “We didn't have to invest in their education or training. But if we invest in the one-time intervention necessary to help them utilize that training here in our country, it will pay great dividends for them and for the rest of us as well.”

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Upwardly Global, founded in 2000, is a national, award-winning nonprofit organization with offices in San Francisco, New York, and Chicago. Upwardly Global helps work-authorized, skilled immigrants rebuild their professional careers in the U.S. by providing professional job-search training and access to employers with global talent needs. To date, the organization has coached more than 3000 skilled immigrants and has assisted more than 1500 professionals back into their career field. Upwardly Global is a member of IMPRINT, a coalition of non-profit organizations working to integrate skilled immigrants into the U.S. workforce. For more information, visit <http://www.upwardlyglobal.org>.