

January 20, 2025

Policy Statement by the Community Action Marin Board of Directors on Immigration, Racial Equity, and Human Rights

Immigration is an intrinsic part of the human experience and protection from discrimination or persecution based on immigration status is a human right. Community Action Marin (“the Agency”) acknowledges that we are operating on Indigenous land. We honor the Indigenous peoples who cared for this land and its communities before us. All those who are not Indigenous are immigrants to the United States, arriving through voluntary migration or forced diaspora.

The United States is fortunate to have become the home of millions of immigrants from all over the world. People come to this country for many reasons. The many layers of richness that define the wealth and promise of the United States have been formed by a multitude of immigrant populations. Immigrants strengthen communities by being leaders, creating jobs, establishing businesses, contributing to economic growth, and enriching cultural diversity. They spend, invest, pay taxes, and raise productivity. They bring with them important and diverse values and cultural experiences that enrich society. Yet society fails to support immigrant communities and recognize their full dignity and agency by not having a humane path to citizenship, by continuing to promote negative images of immigrants at a national level, and by blaming them for the complex social and economic problems society faces.

It is vital to acknowledge the racist foundations upon which many of the United States’ political, legal, and economic institutions were built and continue to operate. This country was built and has prospered through centuries of enslavement of Africans and the intentional genocide of Indigenous people. It has adopted policies and practices both foreign and domestic with the effect of stripping select groups of their freedoms, resources, livelihoods, and well-being. These policies and practices have perpetuated historical inequities and exclusionary practices. This highlights the need for a more humane, inclusive, and equitable approach that fosters self-determination for each and every person.

Successful inclusion requires the understanding, cultural humility, wisdom, and receptivity of policymakers. It requires the willingness of community members to stand for racial equity. It requires us to adopt an awareness of the intersectional nature of racism and immigration in our county so that we can fully promote diversity, strengthen collaboration across marginalized communities for systemic change, and assist new immigrants in their transition. Our efforts to contribute to this process should be guided by the principle that all people deserve equal protection, as well as equal access to health care, employment, education, legal assistance, and basic needs such as food and shelter without discrimination. Providing these essential services is not only humane and in keeping with our values but also constitutes a wise investment in our country’s well-being and socio-economic future.

We face a historical opportunity and moral responsibility to address the continued existence and long-term effects of racial inequity and systemic racism in ourselves, our organizations, institutions, and communities. It is our goal to celebrate and support immigrant communities so that individuals and families feel welcome, have rights, have access to resources, and can contribute to and thrive in our community.

WE THEREFORE AFFIRM THE FOLLOWING:

1. the Agency recognizes the contribution of immigrants and refugees to our country and advocates for their human and constitutional rights. We oppose those voices that fan the fear and hatred of immigrants, and invite dialogue to address biases, gaps, and barriers.
2. the Agency stands for racial equity. We are committed to be a part of a larger community conversation and work in partnership with public and private interests to undo racist ideologies in our community.
3. the Agency supports effective networking among federal, state, and local governments, along with community-based organizations, to assist communities in delivering needed services to immigrants.
4. the Agency supports the development of national and international policies that address the underlying causes for global migration and seek solutions to those conditions in countries experiencing massive out-migration of its populations.
5. the Agency supports fair treatment of all individuals regarding employment, wages, and taxes and opposes discrimination by policy, law, or practice based on immigration status.
6. the Agency opposes the trends, visible especially since September 11, 2001, toward the criminalization of immigrants and the militarization of immigration law enforcement.
7. the Agency condemns discriminatory immigration policies and practices that disproportionately target immigrants of non-European descent, advocating for equitable treatment of all individuals.
8. the Agency opposes the indiscriminate seizure for deportation of undocumented individuals. The Agency supports sanctuary policies that uphold the dignity and contributions of all residents, regardless of immigration status, and advocates for public policies creating pathways to legal residency and citizenship.
9. DACA: the Agency supports the rights of persons brought to the U.S. as children to pursue higher education, the career of their choice, and a future in this country. It urges all federal elected officials and policymakers not only to continue the DACA program but to pass legislation that provides a pathway to citizenship for these young people.
10. TPS: the Agency believes that immigrants from countries designated under the Temporary Protected Status program (TPS) who have lived and worked in this country and have established families and strong ties in our communities over many years, should have an opportunity to reside here permanently and pursue U.S. citizenship. The Agency opposes the U.S. administration's effort to terminate TPS for these community members and urges Congress to find a legislative solution.

As a Board, we are steadfast in our mission to foster equity, inclusion, and human rights for all, and we invite our community to join us in this vital work.

This policy statement was inspired by the work done in 2018 by the Community Action Board of Santa Cruz.