

September 26, 2022

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street,
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A2
justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Hon. Sean Fraser
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Confederation Building, Suite 110,
House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6
sean.fraser@parl.gc.ca

Cc: Migrant Rights Network - info@migrantrights.ca

RE: We Support Permanent Residence for All

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Fraser,

The 519 – Canada's most prominent 2SLGBTQ+ community centre and service provider – is committed to the health, happiness, and full participation of our communities. A City of Toronto agency with an innovative model of service, space, and leadership, we strive to make a real difference in people's lives, while working to promote inclusion, understanding, and respect.

Our New to Canada team supports LGBTQ+ refugee settlements including helping people navigate the legal systems and build community. Last year alone, we had over 1,000 newcomers participate in our programs, with 530 refugee claimants receiving direct settlement support. We know that we can build stronger communities by opening more doors to new immigrants.

Permanent resident status is the mechanism through which all other rights are accessed. Undocumented people, migrant workers, and refugees are being exploited in substandard working conditions, because regressive immigration and labour laws restrict their agency and leave them open to abuse. Lack or absence of permanent resident status makes it difficult, and often impossible, for migrants to speak up for their rights or access services, including those they may be eligible for, because of a well-founded fear of reprisals, termination, eviction, and deportation. Migrants experience insecure housing, abuse at work, poverty, and fear. Uncertainty about the future, constant stress about making ends meet, and the risk of detention and deportation negatively impacts their physical and mental wellbeing.

Canada, like most of North America and Europe, has not seen a real inclusive regularization program for undocumented people in decades. Moreover, migrants on work and study permits in low-waged industries, like care workers, farmworkers and gig-workers, have only a few tiny and difficult-to-access immigration programs to apply for permanent residency. The vast

majority of undocumented and temporary status migrants living and working in the country are excluded from permanent residence.

Now is the time for Canada to take a strong stance on inclusion and equity by extending permanent residence to 1.7 million migrants and 500,000 undocumented migrants. It is time for Canada to immediately implement a regularization program granting permanent resident status to all undocumented people without exception; in addition, permanent residence for all migrants, particularly those in low-wage jobs.

We know that there have been positive steps in the right direction. The Prime Minister's [mandate letter](#) asking the Immigration Minister to create a "regularization program" for undocumented migrants, and unanimous [parliamentary motion](#) asking the Immigration Minister to create a plan to give permanent residency to workers of all skill levels will be a critical step. Migrant Rights Network has created [a set of proposals to guide the development of a regularization program](#). These principles will help develop an equitable framework which will support new Canadians.

Prime Minister, you and your government have repeatedly committed to upholding values of equity, fighting racism, and welcoming immigrants and refugees. Now is the time to fix historic injustices by implementing a comprehensive program instead of a partial or exclusionary one.

The 519 sees thousands of refugees come through our doors annually. We see their challenges and know what a deep impact this program would have on our communities. By providing more jobs and job security, we can truly take steps towards equity and inclusion.

The time to act is now.

Sincerely,



Maura Lawless
Executive Director,
The 519