



April 15, 2024

**Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau**  
Prime Minister of Canada  
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Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A2  
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**Hon. Marc Miller**  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6  
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**Cc: Migrant Rights Network - [letters@migrantrights.ca](mailto:letters@migrantrights.ca)**

**RE: Regularize All Undocumented People and Ensure Permanent Resident Status for All Migrants**

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Miller,

On behalf of Ontario's Healthcare For All coalition, we are writing to support the federal government's long promised commitment to bring forward a policy providing a program for undocumented individuals in Canada, enabling them to achieve permanent residence status. It has been more than two years since the initial promise to enact this policy, and thousands of undocumented people have now been waiting for years for this life-changing promise to become a reality. Most recently, Minister Miller promised to bring this policy forward in the spring of 2024 and we are yet to see concrete action on this promise.

As members of the Healthcare for All coalition, we have spent many years advocating for publicly funded access to healthcare to all Ontario residents, regardless of immigration status. As healthcare providers, healthcare and allied students, social service workers, community advocates and researchers, we have seen how blocking or limiting access to healthcare has led to irrevocable and avoidable harm for migrants and their families. Take the case of Nell Toussaint, an undocumented Ontario resident who fought for her right to life-saving healthcare in Canadian courts and then at the UN Human Rights Committee. Unable to access the care she needed, Nell lost her vision and suffered amputation before losing her life to premature death. Though Nell eventually got status, much harm had been done by the time [she died in January 2023](#) at the age of 53. Countless others have suffered the same fate.

There are several evidence-based policy solutions that would prevent future tragedies like Nell Toussaint's death, and also improve health equities in our communities. One policy option would be to provide all residents with access to their provincial/territorial healthcare plans, like the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP), enabling everyone living or working in the province to

have equal access to equal care. Healthcare administration would be much simpler, and less costly, than it would be to roll out a new targeted program specifically for newcomers, or to expand the existing Interim Federal Health Plan.

**The most upstream solution to gaps in health access, however, is to ensure undocumented residents are provided permanent immigration status through an accessible, broad, and comprehensive regularization program as promised by the Liberal government.** Not only does this establish immediate access to provincial and territorial healthcare plans, but it sets a foundation for much healthier lives and lifestyles, with access to preventive care, screening, prenatal and maternal care, child and youth care, and mental health care. Among the social determinants of health, [precarity of immigration status is a major contributor](#) to poor health outcomes. The stigma, racism, gender-based discrimination, workplace exploitation, and prolonged family separation that people with precarious status or without status face has direct and negative impacts on their health and wellbeing.

We are concerned that the Liberal government is not only abandoning their promise, but is now introducing worse immigration laws that will result in poorer health outcomes for migrants whose labour is essential to our economy and communities. For instance, this June, the Home Child Care Providers Program and the Home Support Worker Pilot Program will expire. Should this happen, thousands of migrants who care for our young and our elderly will face [worsened conditions](#) of precarity and material hardship.

People in temporary work permits are frequently locked into relationships with employers that result in exploitation and stagnation for both (ample evidence suggests that there is a robust correlation between poor employment conditions, and low levels of [productivity](#) and [innovation](#)). Workers in temporary programs are sent home if they are unable to work due to injury or poor health, and experience even greater workplace insecurity than other workers do. They are excluded from meaningful participation in civic life, and unable to shape the community to which they regularly contribute, even though they are fully impacted by its laws and practices. These conditions of exclusion and marginalization directly contribute to poor health outcomes.

In writing this letter today, we call on Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Miller to:

- Immediately create a comprehensive and inclusive [regularization program](#) that allows all undocumented people to apply for permanent resident status immediately. This means:
  - No caps
  - No restrictions by industry of work or geography
  - No two-step immigration which only gives temporary work permits
- Create an [interim program for migrant caregivers](#) in Canada to apply for permanent resident status without educational accreditation and language test score requirements;
- End migrant exploitation by ending tied work permits and hours of work limits for international students; and ensure permanent resident status for all working class people in Canada today.

The Migrant Rights Network has created specific proposals to make these changes effective and we endorse their call.

Many healthcare providers and social service providers experience undue moral distress as we scramble to connect people to resources and provide care to patients without permanent immigration status (often on a volunteer basis). We have been trained to provide care on the principle that everyone deserves our full attention and the best our resources can provide. This is what universal access to healthcare truly means. We feel that this is what our society expects of us, and this is what we expect of ourselves—we entered these positions because we want to provide care for people, in non-judgmental and non-discriminating ways. Yet we are frequently put into the position of being the mouthpiece of government-created barriers which deny the basic right to health in which we so firmly believe. This puts us in the terrible and unfair position of either perpetuating inequality, or spending hours of our time searching for resources – time that could be better spent actually providing care without discrimination.

We believe that a broad and comprehensive regularization program is the best way to provide both access to healthcare and support for healthier lives for tens of thousands of people living in Canada. This policy would be in line with Canada's commitments to justice and human rights, and set the stage for pragmatic solutions to many social and economic issues that impact our individual and collective health.

Best wishes,

Wendell Block, MD and Maddie Ritts, RSW, MSW

*On behalf of the Healthcare for All Coalition*

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