



American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)

"AILA applauds Senator Gillibrand for introducing the ASPIRE Act, which saves the government time and resources while ensuring our nation can properly welcome asylum seekers who cannot survive without work permits. The current process for asylum seekers to access employment authorization takes far too long. This bill will streamline government red-tape and offer vital stability to asylum seekers," **said Amy Grenier, Policy and Practice Counsel at the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA).**

Hispanic Federation

"Hispanic Federation proudly endorses the ASPIRE Act of 2023, which acknowledges the pressing need to empower immigrants with the opportunity to work and contribute to our nation's social and economic fabric. Expedited work authorization is a commonsense policy that would allow asylum seekers to provide for their families without forcing local governments to scramble to administer shelter and other resources. This legislation also recognizes and invests in the invaluable work of community-based nonprofit organizations, who provide essential support to immigrants, helping them navigate our complex immigration system and promoting culturally and linguistically relevant integration services. If passed, this legislation will positively transform communities across the country and finally provide a recourse to municipalities, community-based organizations, and thousands of families willing to work hard with the opportunity of achieving the American dream," **said Frankie Miranda, President and CEO of Hispanic Federation.**

Covenant House New York

"Covenant House New York has served over 175 young migrants since this crisis began, many who have passed dead bodies and fought off traffickers as they traveled through the Darien Gap in the hopes of finding freedom from persecution. All they want is to be safe and to work. Yet, they wait endlessly for work authorization all while local employers are desperate for staff. We are tremendously grateful for Senator Gillibrand's leadership and are hopeful that with the passage of the *ASPIRE Act*, our young people will have a chance of a successful future free from exploitation," **said Jayne Bigelsen, Vice President of Advocacy of Covenant House New York.**

NY Immigration Coalition

"The ASPIRE Act of 2023 recognizes the challenges asylum seekers have acclimatizing to their new homes. Then it addresses that issue with some of the best ways the Federal government can support our newest neighbors. First is by supporting local governments and nonprofit organizations who have been on the ground since day one supporting the immediate needs of asylum seekers. Another is by expediting work authorization and properly funding U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) which will allow the agency to clear their backlog and make them better equipped to process applications in a timely manner. This is crucial to help move newly arrived asylum seekers in New York and around the country towards self-sufficiency and being able to provide for themselves and their

families. We thank Senator Gillibrand for moving this critical bill forward and look forward to its passage into law," said **Murad Awawdeh, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition.**

Asian American Federation

"The Asian American Federation is proud to endorse the ASPIRE Act of 2023. This critical legislation acknowledges the urgent need to reform our immigration system and create a more compassionate and efficient process for asylum seekers. By reducing the waiting period for employment authorization and providing much-needed funding to address the backlog, the ASPIRE Act empowers individuals fleeing persecution to rebuild their lives and contribute to our society faster. The Asian American Federation in endorsing this bill, recognizes the profound impact it will have on the lives of those seeking safety and refuge. We urge Congress to swiftly pass the ASPIRE Act and reaffirm our nation's commitment to fairness, justice, and compassion," said **Jo-Ann Yoo, Executive Director of Asian American Federation.**

Safe Passage Project

"We at Safe Passage Project applaud Senator Gillibrand for introducing the ASPIRE Act which, if passed, will help asylum seekers meet their basic needs and reduce extreme backlogs in the immigration agency," said **Angela Fernández, Executive Director of Safe Passage Project.** "There is no reason why asylum seekers should have to wait 6 months after filing their asylum claim before they can get a work permit; our neighbors need food and housing now, not six months from now. By fast-tracking work permit applications to 30 days post-asylum filing, we will be helping asylum seekers help their families. In addition, the ASPIRE Act's support for shelter services and funding to reduce immigration backlogs demonstrate a humane approach to our legal and moral obligations to people who have sought refuge in our country. Safe Passage Project heartily endorses the ASPIRE Act."

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"At our best, the United States has been a nation that has, albeit imperfectly, been a beacon of hope and refuge for immigrants and refugees who have fled and survived oppression, poverty and persecution, and come to America in search of a better life for themselves and their families. We thank Senator Gillibrand and Senator Merkley for their leadership on the ASPIRE Act.

Everyone--including those seeking refuge and Americans already here--will be much better off if we actually build safe, orderly pathways for migration, and ensure that once people are here, they have the ability to work legally in a more timely fashion. This will ensure that while they go through their asylum process, they can more easily contribute to our nation and economy--and support themselves, including with access to stable housing. Congress should pass this legislation immediately," said **Todd Schulte, FWD.us President.**

African Communities Together

"We welcome the introduction of the ASPIRE Act, a necessary step in meeting asylum seekers' needs and increasing our institutions' capacity to support them. With the passing of the ASPIRE Act, asylum seekers will have access to critical resources that will allow them to set the groundwork for their new lives in the U.S. The ASPIRE Act is an opportunity to serve as a blueprint for the rest of the country on how to sustainably and respectfully respond to the influx of asylum seekers, which has reached crisis levels in states like NY.," said **Diana Konaté, Policy Director of African Communities Together**

Haitian Bridge Alliance

"The ASPIRE Act would be a game changer for new asylum seekers," said Nicole Phillips, Legal Director of Haitian Bridge Alliance. "Our clients come to the United States ready to work and restart their lives, but waiting periods and backlogs prevent them from receiving work permits (EADs) for over a year after filing for asylum. The delay forces asylum seekers to risk deportation and work in exploitative situations without EADs to survive. Giving people the chance to work and support our economy is a win-win," **said Nicole Phillips, Legal Director of Haitian Bridge Alliance.**

Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)

"Asylum seekers struggle to support themselves and their children before they get a work permit," **said Conchita Cruz, Co-Executive Director of the Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP).** "As a result, access to faster work permits is a top priority for our membership, comprising more than 500,000 asylum seekers living in the United States. Right now, the law is standing in the way of asylum seekers getting their work permits faster. Senator Gillibrand's ASPIRE Act will help asylum seekers and other immigrants get to work and support their families."

National Immigration Project (NIPNLG)

"Increasingly, anti-immigrant governors are using asylum seekers as political pawns, moving them around the country to score points with their base. The ASPIRE Act proposes sensible solutions for states that are welcoming newly arrived asylum seekers, ensuring that there are funds for housing and that asylum seekers can work to support themselves as quickly as possible," **said Victoria Neilson, a New York-based supervising attorney at the National Immigration Project (NIPNLG).**

Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative (Immigrant ARC)

"The embedded failures of the immigration legal system continue to hold our country back, preventing us from both upholding our values towards those who come seeking protection from harm and from fully leveraging the enormous economic, civic, and cultural benefits of including immigrants in our communities. The ASPIRE Act includes much needed reforms to meet the needs of the thousands of asylum seekers who are getting stuck in an opaque system that, as it currently stands, is designed to make them fail. Migration is natural and until it is safe to stay home, people will not stop coming to the US believing our promise of freedom and opportunity for all. We are thankful to Senator Gillibrand for introducing this bill that will provide critical infrastructure fixes to a system that is buckling under the pressure caused by thirty years of inaction," **said Camille J. Mackler, Esq., Executive Director of Immigrant Advocates Response Collaborative (Immigrant ARC).**

Central American Legal Assistance

"Central American Legal Assistance wholeheartedly endorses the ASPIRE Act. The current crisis in responding to the increased influx of immigrants and asylum seekers calls out for a federal solution. Thanks goodness for Sen. Gillibrand," **said Anne Pilsbury, Executive Director of Central American Legal Assistance (CALA)**

United Way of New York City

“Leaving one’s country because of an imminent threat is never easy. The families that have landed in each of our cities come to contribute to our incredible country with the sweat of their brow. All they are asking for is for the opportunity to do so legally. United Way of New York City applauds Senator Gillibrand for seeing so clearly that we must expedite the processes that are keeping our new arrivals from obtaining the necessary tools to sustain themselves and their families and formally integrate into their new communities. The ASPIRE Act is a critical step forward in ensuring that asylum seekers are able to start their lives with much less uncertainty while at the same time, giving community-based organizations that have contributed so much to this moment the resources they need to continue to provide the life changing services they are known for,” **said Grace Bonilla, President, and CEO of United Way of New York City**

Mixteca Organization

"As an organization advocating for the fair and humane treatment of asylum seekers, we wholeheartedly endorse the ASPIRE Act of 2023. This legislation recognizes the urgent need to address the challenges faced by vulnerable migrants seeking safety and protection. By expediting work permit authorizations, we empower asylum seekers to contribute to their communities and support themselves while navigating the asylum process. The allocation of \$2 billion in funding for USCIS will enhance the agency's capacity to process asylum applications efficiently and reduce the backlog, ensuring timely access to the protection they deserve. Additionally, the \$10 billion funding for the Shelter and Services Program demonstrates a commitment to providing necessary resources to local governments and nonprofit organizations, allowing organizations like Mixteca to continue providing critical services to migrants. The ASPIRE Act is a significant step towards a more compassionate and effective immigration system, and we urge all stakeholders to support this important legislation." **said Lorena Koruosuias, Executive Director of Mixteca Organization, Inc.**

Neighbors Link

“Neighbors Link supports the ASPIRE Act. New York is currently facing labor shortages in key industries and giving asylum seekers the opportunity to apply for work authorization more quickly would be a win for the state's economy as well as for individuals and families who are trying to build a self-sufficient life. In addition, the funds provided by the ASPIRE Act would enable better coordination among the government agencies, non-profit organizations and community groups who are working to welcome new arrivals. At Neighbors Link, we have seen firsthand that immigrants have been critical to the growth and revitalization of our communities. We know that the new asylum seekers who are arriving in our communities will do the same if they are given the opportunity,” **said Carola Otero Bracco, Executive Director of Neighbors Link.**

Violence Intervention Program, Inc. (VIP)

“For 39 years, the Violence Intervention Program has worked with Latina survivors of domestic and sexual violence, most of whom are immigrants. We know first-hand the devastating trauma that asylees endure when fleeing their home countries and the destabilization that can result when they are caught in bureaucratic limbos in the U.S., unable to work, and where few – if any – resources exist to help them find food, shelter and other desperately needed services. The ASPIRE Act of 2023 will address all of

these challenges by creating a solid plan that is both practical and compassionate for both asylees and the US communities that host them. We applaud Sen. Gillibrand for introducing this legislation and ask all US Senators to support it,” **said Margarita Guzman, Executive Director of Violence Intervention Program (VIP).**

Mercy Center

“Mercy Center, Inc., strongly endorses the ASPIRE Act of 2023. The ability to obtain an Employment Authorization Document is crucial for Asylum seekers, who sometimes have to wait even more than 180 days to apply because their clock is stopped while they await their first hearing in Immigration Court, for example. In New York, there are nearly 193,836 cases in the backlog out of a backlog of 2 million cases nationwide. With work authorization, Asylum seekers can begin to put their lives back together after having fled for their lives in their country of origin. Legal work authorization provides the sense of security that many have not felt in years and provides Asylum seekers with the means for them to provide for themselves and their families,” **said Julia Ponce-Vega, Director of Immigrant Services of Mercy Center.**

Coalition for Immigrant Freedom

“For many asylum seekers, work is both a source of livelihood as well as of dignity,” **said Alba Lucero Villa, Executive Director of the Coalition for Immigrant Freedom,** “By providing faster access to the right to work, the ASPIRE Act will protect asylum seekers and strengthen the socio-economic fabric of local communities.”

New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)

“Through our work on the front lines supporting New York City’s asylum seekers and immigrant communities, we know that the reforms proposed in the ASPIRE Act are essential to preserving the rights of recently arrived immigrants seeking safety in our country,” **said Lisa Rivera, president and CEO of New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG).** “Expedited work permit authorizations and access to shelter and food services will give our asylum-seeking neighbors the chance to live, work, and thrive. Comprehensive policy and funding reform of this kind is sorely needed to keep families from the harms of detainment, deportation, and more. We thank Senator Gillibrand for introducing this bill and spearheading these changes.”