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**Foreign-born Virginians are Key Contributors to State's Economy,
Prosperity**

High rates of employment and citizenship, yet challenges remain

RICHMOND, Va. -- Virginia's immigrants are well-educated, highly engaged workers and have high rates of starting their own businesses, according to a new report published today by The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis, an independent fiscal and economic policy organization in Richmond. But many also face significant challenges in areas like owning a home and accessing health insurance.

"At a time when lawmakers are considering eliminating in-state tuition for some immigrants who are lawfully present in Virginia, finding ways to invest in the success of all Virginians, no matter their place of birth, is critical to building the strongest possible commonwealth," says Commonwealth Institute President Michael Cassidy. "Access to college education is key to broadly shared prosperity in today's economy, and if Virginia wants to continue to have some of the highest incomes and rates of college education of any state--among both immigrants and non-immigrants alike--we must continue working to expand access to college, not arbitrarily shut the door on some students."

Among the report's key findings:

- **Foreign-born Virginians are more likely to work in white-collar industries.** Virginia's foreign-born workers have the highest rate of employment in the professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services sector of any U.S. state. The share of Virginia's foreign-born workers employed in that sector and in the educational, health care, and social services sector has grown since 2007.
- **Virginia immigrants are well educated and have high rates of employment, resulting in high household incomes.** About 40 percent of the state's immigrants over age 25 have earned at least a bachelor's degree, the fourth-highest rate among the states. More than seven in ten foreign-born Virginia adults are working or looking for work. As a result, the median income among households

headed by foreign-born Virginians is \$68,585, well above the national median of \$52,250 for all households.

- **Virginia’s immigrants are increasingly likely to be citizens and to have been in the U.S. for many years.** The number of naturalized U.S. citizens in Virginia has grown to over 475,000, up 37 percent since 2007, the largest increase of any state in the South Atlantic region. And more than four in five immigrant Virginians has been in the United States for more than five years.
- **Immigrants in Virginia are less likely than their native-born peers to have any health insurance.** In 2013, 29 percent of foreign-born Virginians had no health insurance, compared to 10 percent of native-born Virginians.
- **The homeownership rate among Virginia households headed by immigrants fell 13.8 percent** between 2007 and 2013, the second-biggest decline in the country.
- **Some foreign-born Virginians face language barriers.** Almost one in five immigrant households has no one over the age of 14 who can speak English “very well.”

“Addressing these and other challenges faced by Virginia’s immigrant communities is critical to ensuring that the commonwealth affords all Virginians the opportunity to reach their fullest potential,” says Cassidy.

The full report, *Vital for Prosperity*, can be found online at www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org.

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About The Commonwealth Institute

The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis provides credible, independent, and accessible information and analyses of fiscal and economic issues with particular attention to the impacts on low- and moderate-income persons. Our products inform fiscal and budget policy debates and contribute to sound decisions that improve the well-being of individuals, communities and Virginia as a whole. Visit www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org for more information.