



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Media Contact**

Patrick Getlein  
Communications Director  
patrick@thecommonwealthinstitute.org  
804-396-2051 x103  
www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org

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## **Immigrants Are Vital to Hampton Roads Economy**

### ***Lack of affordable housing and health care present challenges***

RICHMOND, VA – One out of every 11 entrepreneurs in Hampton Roads are immigrants, according to new analysis released today by the Commonwealth Institute, an economic research and policy organization based in Richmond. That means there are almost 4,000 foreign-born residents of the region who are operating their own businesses. That's a higher rate than for native-born residents of the region.

In addition, more than three-quarters of all immigrants in the region are in their prime working years between the ages of 18 and 65, while among native-born Virginians, the rate is under two-thirds.

“The economic contributions of immigrants are often overlooked in public discussions about policies that affect foreign-born residents,” says Institute President Michael Cassidy. “But this finding is important because it shows immigrants are making significant contributions to the Hampton Roads economy, and they’re doing so right now.”

The new analysis will be the subject of a forum of immigrant leaders, businesses, and advocates at the Oberndorf Central Library in Virginia Beach this evening at 6:30 p.m. ([more info here.](#)) co-sponsored by The Hampton Roads Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; The Asian Business Association; The League of Women Voters of South Hampton Roads; and The Commonwealth Institute.

Among the report's key findings:

- Immigrants living in Hampton Roads are diverse, and most have been in the United States for many years.
- The most common country of origin for immigrants living in Hampton Roads is the Philippines, but no country accounts for more than 21 percent of the region's foreign-born residents.
- More than half of foreign-born residents of Hampton Roads have been in the United States for more than 15 years.
- A majority of immigrants living in Hampton Roads are naturalized U.S. citizens.

But the region's immigrants also face a number of challenges

- One third of foreign-born residents of the region do not speak English at least “very well.”
- Most immigrant-headed households in Hampton Roads are homeowners, but almost 4 in 10 immigrant-headed homeowner households spend a higher than recommended share of their income on housing costs.
- While almost 90 percent of non-immigrant residents of the region have health insurance, only 77 percent of foreign-born residents have coverage. This problem is particularly acute for non-citizen immigrants in Hampton Roads, who have limited access to public coverage.

“We need to make sure these workers and families in Hampton Roads are not falling through the cracks,” says Cassidy. “And we need to work together to make sure all residents of our region have the tools and resources they need to succeed.”

The full report, *Vital for Prosperity: The facts about immigrants and their contributions to the economy of Hampton Roads*, can be found online at [www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org](http://www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org).

**NOTE:** This is the third in a series of three reports analyzing the economic contributions of immigrants in key regions of the state. All three reports – and our statewide analysis – can be found at [www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org](http://www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org).

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