

National Association of Social Workers

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To: House Labor Committee
Re: In Opposition to H-7217

Following are potential concerns with the implementation of the mandatory E-Verify system.

- Despite attempts to improve the system, E-Verify continues to have faults and as noted in recent national articles in the LA Times and Washington Post, at times inaccurately identifies immigrants and U.S. citizens as not being “employment-eligible.” This will, in some cases, prevent qualified U.S. citizens and documented immigrants from getting jobs and unfortunately may encourage discriminatory hiring practices among some employers.
- Potential and current employees are likely to be faced with erroneous results of the E-Verify system, especially those who have immigrated here or changed names after a marriage or divorce. This means it is another piece of legislation that will affect everyone, but unfairly target the immigrant population.
- Naturalized citizens are likely to become targets of discrimination and possibly victims of identity fraud and chronic unemployment.
- The appeal process may still take too long for some people who need to find work immediately to support themselves and their families. The eight day window for appeal is too short. The potential employee is left holding the bag while the verification process is going on potentially, which could take several months.
- Instituting E-Verify, based on flawed and/or missing data, is an undue burden on business. Businesses will be unable to hire qualified employees based on the determination of the verification search, regardless of the validity of the search results. There is also no guarantee that companies that use the E-Verify system are any less likely to be audited.
- In our opinion, it does not make sense to impose a questionable practice when national immigration reform will define the use of verification of immigration status in the future.
- Not only does the system have internal errors, but the individuals with “tentative non-confirmation” are caught in a “catch-22”. Many in this situation need to work to provide for themselves and their families and will work “under the table” to supply these needs, which ultimately evades employment regulations and taxes and places themselves at grave physical and financial risk by unscrupulous employers. This will also negatively impact the economy of Rhode Island, as fewer residents will be paying into the tax system by working for cash pay. **In fact, newly arrived individuals and families often spend all of their disposable income in local businesses.**

It is our belief that newly arrived individuals from other countries contribute positively to the economy and to our culture. Overall, policies developed for non-documented or illegal immigrants can and need to be handled in a much more humane and productive way for all concerned based on economic growth, actual use of public services, and a human cost to benefit ratio. We live in a “world community” and Rhode Island is very much a part of that community. Rhode Island should not, in our opinion, place itself in front to national policy.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rick Harris, LICSW
Executive Director