

## The Students We Share: A Priority for California-Mexico Cooperation

### Executive Summary

Mexico and California have deep ties in terms of both trade and migration. Binational<sup>1</sup> young people on both sides of the border are especially well suited to participate in the dynamic cross-border economy. However, a host of pressures is leading to falling educational attainment and limited job opportunities for these youth.

One out of every three Mexican immigrants to the U.S. settle in California and Latinos make up 40% of the state's total population. As a result, the millions of deportations of Mexican immigrants over the last decade have disproportionately affected California families, dramatically impacting the educational trajectories of the State's young people. There are currently half a million U.S.-born school-age youth in Mexico, and many more Mexican-born youth who have spent considerable time in U.S. classrooms (INEGI). In California an additional 750,000 students, most of them of Mexican-origin, have undocumented parents and are at risk of being forced to leave the country (Education Trust-West).

The scale of the issue dwarfs existing efforts in both Mexico and California to assist binational students. A failure to enact comprehensive policies to support their education will have long-lasting implications for the social fabric and economic competitiveness of communities on both sides of the border. The mobility of youth back and forth across the border means that binational cooperation is crucial for the implementation of policies to limit the disruption of migration on their educational trajectories. In addition, the intensity of migration at the border creates the need for special Cross-Border Education Hubs that enable innovation in education and workforce development policies at the local level.

At a minimum, the children of migrant families should have equal access to schooling and realistic pathways to higher education in both countries. Achieving this requires enacting and fully resourcing policies to:

- Empower parents to navigate school systems in both countries
- Help students build and maintain literacy in both English and Spanish
- Train teachers to support the integration of binational youth in the classroom
- Ensure that educational institutions in both countries provide easy access to enrollment

In both countries, the pathway to a successful adulthood for these young people is full of obstacles. There is tremendous need for effective policies to support these students in creating and achieving educational and professional aspirations that take full advantage of their unique bicultural upbringing.

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<sup>1</sup> "Binational" refers to students with experience living and studying in both countries, regardless of citizenship