E-Verify is unreliable and will burden Florida businesses

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For the average American, the concept of E-Verify — the web-based system that allows employers to verify the eligibility of their employees to work in the U.S. — might seem innocent. After all, don't we want employers to confirm that the people they are hiring are legitimately permitted to work in our communities?

Unfortunately, it's not that simple (nor necessary). I can remember reading a 2016 article from the CATO Institute's Alex Nowrasteh, entitled "Serious Problems with E-Verify," that outlined the legitimate concerns of an expanded system of employment verification.

Now, as Florida considers legislation to make E-Verify mandatory for businesses in the state, I'm increasingly concerned, both as a citizen and as the director of a small, nonprofit organization that is focused on serving vulnerable children and other vulnerable populations in Florida.

For starters, verifying eligibility for employment is the federal government's responsibility and systems are already in place for that process. Requiring the use of E-Verify at the state level only duplicates efforts.

Additionally, E-Verify would place an added bureaucratic burden on small businesses and nonprofits in Florida, with certain consequences for the viability of certain businesses and services provided for Floridians, particularly amongst those who were foreign born. Almost 4.4 million immigrants call Florida home, accounting for 21% of 21 million people living in Florida.

The notion that my local place of worship, our small organization, local schools, our area farms and other wonderful businesses would have to wait several days for approval from the government before hiring urgently needed employees seems cumbersome at best and prohibitive at worst.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the E-Verify system is flawed and unreliable.

I am especially concerned for those organizations, institutions and businesses who rely on immigrant workers in order to meet the demands of doing business in Florida. Farming, hotels, restaurants, charities, universities and schools will all be deeply impacted if Florida lawmakers decide to add yet another layer of bureaucracy on the shoulders of employers.

According to research from the CATO Institute, "E-Verify is ineffective at detecting illegal immigrant workers. On top of that, E-Verify's accuracy rates are notoriously difficult to judge. An audit of the system by the firm Westat found that an estimated 54 percent of

unauthorized workers were incorrectly found to be work authorized by E-Verify because of rampant document fraud. E-Verify relies upon the documents presented by the workers themselves to their employer. Frequently, identity information comes from deceased Americans – a loophole the government seems incapable of closing."