Afghanistan, Myanmar, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. New York State is home to about 4.5 million immigrants (defined as foreign-born individuals), according to 2017 statistics published by the Migration Policy Institute: 23 percent of the state’s population (a 2.5 percent jump from 2000). In a continuing trend, more than a million live outside New York City.

That growing statewide base was critical in winning the 2019 driver’s license law, and disproved, from Choi’s perspective, the “traditional notion that immigrant issues are a political loser outside of” New York City. Twelve other states already offer licensing options; in New York, debate on the issue spanned 18 years, raising concerns across party lines, and was also used as a partisan wedge. A handful of clerks in Republican-held counties sued over the law (courts have so far upheld it) and some commentators railed against it. “What message are we sending?” asked Fox Nation host Tomi Lahren when the law took effect in December. “Come here illegally, remain here illegally, and instead of paying the consequences, our government will rubber-stamp your illegal activity and hand out perks, like driver’s licenses?”

Choi is undeterred. Everyone benefits when every driver on the road is certified and insured, he argues. “It also pumps millions of dollars into our economy and tax coffers by allowing maximum mobility for all members of our economy, workforce, and society.” Most importantly, he adds, it enables people “to take their kids to school or the doctor’s office, and attend places of worship free of the worry of arrest and po-

Honoring Alumni Leaders

At its winter meeting, the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) celebrated both those who have made exceptional contributions to their local Harvard clubs and Shared Interest Groups (SIGs), and those organizations that have especially benefitted their alumni communities.

This year’s Outstanding Volunteer Leadership Awards recipients are:

Lewis Auerbach ’63, A.M. ’64, who, during nearly 40 years of leadership with the Harvard Club of Ottawa, has fostered a strong sense of community among generations of alumni. As club president, he expanded membership, improved finances, forged joint operations with the local HBS Club, and strengthened ties to local charities. As HAA director for clubs and SIGs in Canada, he enriched alumni-student engagement and bolstered connections across the six clubs, especially in support of financial aid.

M. Carolyn Hughes ’54, who since 1960 has held nearly every title on the board of the Harvard Club of Long Island, including president, and has chaired its schools and scholarship committee since 1975. Instrumental in developing robust club programming, she continues to contribute ideas and wisdom, and her time as an HAA director for clubs and SIGs has made her an engaging, inclusive Harvard ambassador.

Madeleine Mejia, Ed.M. ’00, a pivotal leader of the Harvard Club of Southern California. As co-vice president of programs for the past five years (helping present more than 60 annually), she has chaired the annual dinner committee, and—as an HAA director for clubs and SIGs—has aided the creation of InstaHarvard events to welcome graduate students into the alumni community. Mejia has also contributed to the growth and success of the Harvard Latino Alumni Alliance in Southern California.

The Outstanding Alumni Community Awards winners are:

The Harvard Club of Hong Kong, which in the last five years has recognized the scholastic and personal achievements of 726 students through its Harvard Prize Book program. Building on these efforts, the club has created a mentorship program pairing alumni with promising young scholars and a sponsorship enabling underprivileged teenagers to attend a summer program at Harvard. The club has also revitalized its programming, engaging alumni and their families through popular events and partnerships. By restructuring its governance and succession planning, the club has established a strong foundation for years to come.

Harvard Alumni for Global Women’s Empowerment, aka GlobalWVE, founded in 2013, which has grown to include nearly 1,200 members and supporters in 44 countries. The SIG has raised awareness about honor killings, the trafficking of girls in Nepal and sexual enslavement of Yazidi girls by ISIS, and the plight of female refugees in Syria. GlobalWVE’s 13-member board, volunteers, and affiliated student group continue to develop a multigenerational community, notably through an essay contest, offered in seven countries, that invites high-schoolers to answer the question: “What’s the biggest challenge facing women and girls in your country today?”