



Dear Representative,

We are faith leaders and faith communities who support the Driving Pennsylvania Forward Campaign, because we desire to be true to the teachings of our religious traditions and our deepest faith values. We are urging you to support House Bill 279.

Our various traditions inspire us to act.

Judaism teaches us that “when a foreigner resides in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing in your land must be treated as a citizen. Love them as you love yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt” (Leviticus 19:33-34). Thirty-six times it is written in the Torah to welcome and love immigrants, to respect immigrants, to have the same laws for immigrants as everyone else. The number 36 is significant because in Hebrew, the number 18 means “life.” When immigrants are welcomed, loved, and respected, life is doubled, life abounds.

Islam is clear about our duty to help refugees, migrants and asylum seekers to the extent of our ability, just as we would wish someone to help us if we were in their place. The Messenger of Allah, prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), said: Whoever fulfills the needs of his brother, God will fulfill his needs; whoever brings his brother out of a discomfort, God will bring him out of the discomforts of the Day of Resurrection, and whoever provides sanctuary to a Muslim, God will provide a sanctuary to him on the Day of Resurrection.” Hadith reported by Abu Huraira, a companion of the prophet.

Christianity reminds us in Matthew 25:35 that nations are judged based upon how they welcome immigrants. Jesus says, “When you welcome the stranger, you are welcoming me.” God’s people are called to extend kinship to those who are on the margins—the dispossessed, the dishonored, the disinherited, and the displaced (immigrants, migrants, refugees, and foreigners).

We stand in unity across our different faiths to love the stranger. And because of that call to love the stranger, we stand with how the law was written prior to 2002. At that time, Pennsylvania’s residents were able to legally obtain a driver’s license with a federal Tax ID number. In 2009, PennDOT canceled tens of thousands of legally obtained driver’s licenses. Our commonwealth is currently the home of 150,000-200,000 immigrant neighbors who cannot obtain a driver’s license unless they have a social security number. There are sixteen other states that already grant access to driver’s licenses to people who don’t have a SSN; these include our neighboring states of Maryland, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware.

Without driver’s licenses, many undocumented workers are unable to meet their basic human needs such as:

- Renting an apartment, installing utilities, accessing adequate healthcare and providing shelter and safety to their families.
- Being forced to risk driving without a license in order to access employment to provide for their families and their survival.
- Driving without a license limits their ability to pick up their children at school or attend their children’s school activities. Mixed status families live with the fear of separation and are unable to access educational opportunities and scholarships for which their children qualify.
- Being unable to get car insurance in their own name, causing them to be at risk for becoming victims of fraud.
- Being forced to live in the “shadows” and unable to contribute productively to the welfare of our communities.
- Being able to find work that allows them to contribute fully to the economy through their creativity, skill, and payment of taxes. <https://drivingpafoward.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/immigrant-Driver’s-License-FINAL-20200922-1.pdf>



Providing driver's licenses benefits our society by:

- Granting safety to all Pennsylvania's residents, ensuring that all drivers have passed the driving examination, know the driving laws, and are licensed to drive.
- Enabling our Commonwealth to gain revenue from increases in licensing fee and insurance which then results in better job opportunities. This was demonstrated in a recent study that showed how people who are undocumented already pay almost \$135 million in state and local taxes.
- Improving the relationship between law enforcement and immigrant communities is accomplished by reducing the fear of deportation of immigrants and reducing the victimization of immigrants. This will increase immigrant reporting of crimes to law enforcement.

We are people of faith who deeply value the wellbeing of everyone in our Commonwealth. This is accomplished when every driver can obtain a license, insurance, and secure identification. We recognize that 40% of our food comes from the labor of undocumented workers. In Psalm 145:16, the Psalmist prays, "When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing." That means God provides food for OUR tables through THEIR hands.

Therefore, we are urging you to support House Bill 279 which was referred to the Transportation Committee on January 27, 2021. As people of faith we know that immigrants are the ones that harvest our food, pray in our faith communities, and live as our neighbors. We look forward to you becoming a champion on behalf of this legislation.

With faith that moves us to speak with one voice for justice,