

ACCESS TO DRIVER'S LICENSES FOR ALL NEW YORKERS

New York State is unnecessarily narrow in offering access to driver's licenses, a restrictiveness that has negative consequences for everyone. There are currently 12 states, plus the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, that issue driver's licenses to unauthorized immigrants. If driver's licenses were issued to unauthorized immigrants in New York State, we might expect roughly 300,000 immigrants to apply—increasing the total number of driver's licenses issued by about 3 percent.

What are the benefits of making sure that everyone on the road can be tested, licensed, and insured, and that everyone can afford a state-issued form of identification?

POSITIVE EFFECT ON DAILY & SOCIAL LIFE

If unauthorized immigrants had access to driver's licenses, it would help with their daily lives. They could safely and peacefully transport their children to school or doctor appointments, attend school events and grocery shop. And, since driver's licenses are the most commonly used form of ID, having a license could make it easier for unauthorized immigrants to open bank accounts, apply for credit cards, or get into many buildings that now require identification.

ACCESS TO BETTER JOBS

Having a license means access to a wider range of job possibilities. In most parts of New York State, not being able to drive significantly limits where you can work. Having the possibility of working in a wider range of locations can be expected to translate into higher earnings for workers so they can better support their families.

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- **More money will be spent at local shops.** When unauthorized immigrants earn more, they also spend more in the local economy, adding to the volume of sales at grocery stores, retail shops, and a range of businesses both in and beyond the local area.
- **Businesses will get the most out of their employees.** When there's a better match between workers and employers, that's good for the efficiency of the local economy. Employees who work in jobs that take advantage of their abilities are put to the best use, and businesses profit accordingly. It's not adding more workers to the local economy, but it's putting the work efforts of unauthorized immigrants to more productive use.
- **A level playing field for businesses.** Workers who have a wider range of job choices will be better able to walk away from a jobs where they are not being treated decently. That will

give a competitive advantage to businesses that do the right thing in treating their employees well, and will make it harder for employers to gain an upper hand through unfair treatment of workers who are trapped in their jobs by limited mobility. A level playing field is good for the employees, good for their co-workers, and good for the businesses that currently face unfair competition.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Road Safety:** Road safety improves when every driver has to pass tests for driving knowledge, a road test, and a vision test.
- **Improved Interactions with Law Enforcement:** Police and other law enforcement agents would benefit from broader licensing practices since they would be able to identify individuals more rapidly and gain access to their traffic records. Drivers will feel more comfortable reporting accidents, and undocumented immigrants both on the road and off will feel more comfortable cooperating with the police in investigating crimes.
- **Reduce Clogging of Local Courts:** Issuing driver's licenses to all eligible state residents could reduce the number of arrests for driving without a license. The courts could save money on arraignments and trials, or time issuing citations or tickets, and would allow law enforcement to focus on more pressing needs.

INSURANCE

Making sure that everyone on the road is insured offers advantages to all drivers. Access to a license, makes it easier to obtain insurance. Increasing the number of drivers with insurance is a benefit to everyone on the road. It will reduce the number of instances where people involved in crashes lack insurance, drivers and insurance companies can save money on uninsured driver accidents.

UNEXPECTED BENEFITS

Organ Donations: With the increase of number of driver's licenses, there may be an increase in organ donors. In California, since the passage of Assembly Bill 60, the state has seen a 30 percent increase in the state's organ and tissue registry.

COSTS ARE COVERED BY LICENSING FEES

Meaningful outreach about the new program around the state may entail some added costs to ensure that all communities are fairly included. These modest costs can be offset at least in part by the \$65 fee which according to NYS DMV covers the cost of issuing the licenses. If the state had more drivers, it is also likely that the number of cars purchased and registered would also increase, adding to state revenues through sales tax and registration fees.