

PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY OF THOMAS RYAN 3/4/13

My name is Thomas Ryan. I am a member of St. Rose of Lima Church located in the Fair Haven section of New Haven. I am also a member of CONECT.

For the last 22+ years my wife and I have lived in the Fair Haven section of New Haven. For the last 150 years, Fair Haven has been one of the areas of New Haven where immigrants to America have started their life in this country. We have experienced the latest influx of migration first hand. As the children and grandchildren of former immigrants have moved on, we have had many new neighbors. Like any property owner, we hope for good neighbors – people who take care of their property, who respect and show a concern for their neighbors and who work to maintain the quality of life and safety of the neighborhood.

I know that while many have the documents to be here, some do not. I also know that just about every adult drives a car - to work, to the store or to visit friends. They do not just drive in the local area. The fact that there are people driving without licenses or insurance puts everyone driving at risk, not only in my neighborhood but also in every place they drive. I'm sure that most if not all drivers have had the experience of having to hit the brakes for a sudden traffic jam or skidded on an icy road. Accidents happen – to both good and bad drivers, documented or not.

I think this issue of licenses and insurance for undocumented drivers is worthy of a respectful and thorough discussion by the elected representatives of the people of this state. This hearing is a constructive step in this process. We are not the only state that has recognized the issue of people driving without licenses. Three states that I am aware of have found a way to allow undocumented immigrants to get licenses and insurance. They demonstrate that it can be done.

There are possible solutions that can be crafted that benefit all state residents. This is NOT an “immigration policy” issue or a “step to citizenship”; those are Federal issues. Make no mistake, this is a state-wide issue that affects the quality of life and safety of all of our residents. You and your colleagues in GA have the legal authority to deal with this issue.

I thank you for your willingness to come here tonight and look forward to your efforts to improve the safety and quality of life in every neighborhood in CT.