

Monday, March 4, 2013

Transportation Committee Public Hearing
Wilbur Cross High School
New Haven, CT

**Testimony of Brunilda Ferraj before the Transportation Committee regarding
S.B. 628: An act concerning the issuance of drivers' licenses to certain immigrants**

Good evening Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, and members of the Transportation Committee,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify in support of *S.B. 628: An act concerning the issuance of drivers' licenses to certain immigrants*, which has been introduced by your colleague, Senator Looney. My name is Brunilda Ferraj and I am a graduate student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. In May, I will graduate and enter the profession with the goal of promoting policies and programs that improve the well being of individuals and families in vulnerable circumstances.

My work has always focused on the social inclusion of marginalized populations, including immigrants. Being an immigrant myself, I understand the challenges associated with acculturation, language, economic hardship, and trying to find a path to productive citizenship. However, immigrants who are undocumented face additional barriers to social inclusion. For example, an individual's legal status has serious implications for one's psychosocial well being. Thousands of undocumented residents in Connecticut face symptoms of depression and anxiety that are associated with fears of deportation and acts of discrimination. Certainly, you have heard many personal stories of hardship that support my concerns.

Issuing drivers licenses to all Connecticut residents is also a public safety issue that has practical implications for the entire state of Connecticut. Driving is a necessity for the majority of residents; we all drive to work, to school, to church, and to the grocery store. Providing all motorists with the opportunity to obtain a license would ensure that all Connecticut drivers gain the appropriate knowledge and skills necessary for ensuring the safety of all motorists. In addition, I urge you to consider the fiscal impact of S.B. 628, as research indicates that it may generate revenue for the state of Connecticut through fees associated with the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Thus far, only three states including New Mexico, Washington, and Illinois have passed legislation granting drivers licenses to all state residents. S.B. 628 provides Connecticut with the unique opportunity to become a national leader in advancing social justice. The bill clearly underlies values of equality, opportunity, and non-discrimination. I ask you to reflect upon your own values when deliberating the various testimonies that you have heard here today:

How do you think S.B. 628 will affect the dignity and worth of Connecticut residents?

What are the implications of S.B. 628 for families' goals, aspirations and well-being in terms of health, education and work?

Think, for a minute, beyond the practical implications of S.B. 628; think of it not as a license to drive but as a license to come out of the shadows.

Thank you,

Brunilda Ferraj
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