

Barbara M. Schellenberg
38 Haviland Drive
Trumbull, CT 06611

Testimony in support of S.B. 68, S.B. 628 and H.B. 6037
Bills to extend drivers' licenses to undocumented immigrants

Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero and other distinguished committee members, thank you for this opportunity to address these bills.

I have lived in Trumbull for over twenty years with my husband, and we raised our three children there. I am a member of Congregation Beth El in Fairfield and a leader in Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut. I am also a member of the Connecticut bar and a practicing attorney in Bridgeport. I submit this testimony to let you know I feel strongly about extending drivers' licenses to undocumented immigrants. Allowing these Connecticut residents to get licenses would not only be good for them; it would be a benefit to all of the citizens of this state.

Federal law authorizes states to give drivers' licenses to undocumented immigrants, yet Connecticut still conditions eligibility for a driver's license on federal immigration status. This prevents 54,000 Connecticut residents from obtaining licenses, even though like most of us, they need to drive to work to support their families. Their inability to obtain insurance has led to a \$20 million increase in insurance premiums per year for the rest of us who are insured. The state is also losing out on \$2 million per year in revenue from new registrations that would result if undocumented immigrants could obtain licenses. Unlicensed drivers are much more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than licensed drivers, and to flee the scene of an accident. Consequently, these bills would serve to correct an inequity in our system, decrease the cost of insurance premiums, provide much needed revenue to our state, and make our roads safer for all drivers.

The Connecticut legislature is not the first in this country to consider such bills. New Mexico and Washington, and most recently Illinois, permit undocumented immigrants to obtain drivers' licenses. Since New Mexico adopted its statute in 2003, the state has seen a significant drop in the number of uninsured motorists and traffic fatalities, including alcohol related fatalities. Connecticut should follow the lead of these sister states. I urge you to support S.B. 68, S.B. 628 and H.B. 6037.

Barbara Schellenberg