

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you for allowing me to address this Committee Hearing. . My name is Coumba Faye

I am with New Sanctuary Movement, an interfaith organisation with 33 members congregations based in the Philadelphia area and surrounding counties working to advance immigrant justice. At NSM, we believe that all people have God given dignity. We are all children of God and we have the right to live in decent and humane circumstances. The need to drive is a means to achieve such circumstances for over 150,000 individuals in the state of Pennsylvania.

As people of faith, it is our duty to support our brothers and sisters and at this present moment over 150,000 people need our support. People need licenses. Parents especially need licenses to drive their children to school or doctor's appointments. But to do that in PA, a mother has to break the law. When our members' kids have medical emergencies, they need to decide whether or not they will break the law to bring them to the doctor. And the consequences are grave. Driving without a license can mean family separation via deportation or jail time if police decide to call immigration after pulling someone over for a broken tail light. As a mother with two small children I strongly believe that every child should live without fear of losing a parent due to a routine traffic stop on the way to school or doctor's office. People had to emigrate looking for better opportunities in life not to break a law.

Even this possibility has long term consequences, as this threat can lead to a sense of anxiety that could damage a child's development, both physical and psychological. In 2015, a survey showed that 67 percent of children are scared of being separated from their parents when the parents first drive without a driver's license. Nearly 95,000 US citizens in Pennsylvania live with at least with one family member who is undocumented. 170,000 undocumented immigrant represent 19% of the immigrant population and 1% of the total state population in 2016. Furthermore 194,647 people in Pennsylvania including 84,837 US citizens lived with at least one undocumented family member between 2010 and 2014. During the same period, about 2% of children in the state were US citizens living with at least one undocumented family member (56,141 children in total). This situation does not only affect those who are directly impacted by the current law but it affects the whole family structure and the society on a wider view.

A person who is close to me has been living in Philadelphia for nearly 12 years during which time, he worked hard enough to start a corner store business. However his inability to drive greatly affects his ability to run his business. For example, the simple act of going to the wholesale store to stock his shelves becomes a costly nightmare since he has to hire a cab for each of those trips. Being able to drive would not only help him save much needed money, but also give him flexibility and independence. He ended up closing his business which had a bad outcome on his family and children's wellbeing.

I am calling on your humanity and asking you to listen to your community and support HB279.
Thank you for your attention.