

**Draft: HB279**

**Maisum Murtaza's Written Remarks for Committee hearing on Transportation and Driver's Licenses**

- Intro
  - o Thank you to all members of the Transportation Committee for listening to these remarks today. My name is Maisum Murtaza; I work as a Researcher for the Keystone Research Center and Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center. We at PBPC are working hard alongside other talented researchers, advocates, and policy experts to help drive Pennsylvania to a state where everyone can live with dignity and without fear of not being able to meet their basic needs. One step to inching forward towards this goal is the expansion of driver's license access to all immigrants in Pennsylvania through House Bill 279.
- I'd like to start off with all the lessons we've learned over the last 18 months on how our communities and economy function.
  - o The last year a half has been difficult for everyone, but the challenges have put a spotlight on divisive narratives that suggested we are somehow different from the undocumented population or any other population in this country that struggled throughout the pandemic. Every person in Pennsylvania has basic needs that must be met if our communities are to recover from the difficult time that is behind us and the trials that populate the road ahead.
  - o Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic made it increasingly clear what industries our communities cannot function without. We labeled the workers in these occupations as "essential" or "frontline" workers. In Pennsylvania, many of these workers are considered low wage workers and immigrants are disproportionately represented in many of the industries we labeled "essential". Any undocumented immigrants that contributed so heavily to the survival of our state during the pandemic did so knowing the great personal risk they take on every time they leave the house which is why I/we are here to support the access to driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants as a policy that not only benefits us economically but allows an everyone in Pennsylvania to have better lives. .
- PBPC has released two major reports regarding immigrant research. One outlining the overall contribution of immigrants to the state and the second looks specifically at the expansion of driver's licenses and the benefits Pennsylvania would experience through such a policy. These benefits included positive impacts on public safety, increased economic contributions and overall benefits for families, businesses, and individuals. Most importantly, the report supports a policy that allows the undocumented residents of our state to improve their lives, strengthen our communities, and improve job matching while easing family life.
- Allow me to go over some of the main findings of our driver's license report.
  - o There are an estimated 164,000 undocumented individuals in our state who would be eligible for a DL.
  - o Illinois and other state found that after 3 years of changing its DL law, about 50% of eligible undocumented immigrants secured DL when given the chance.

- Using that estimated take-up rate we estimated that approximately 82,000 individuals in PA would secure a DL
  - The output of undocumented workers in Pennsylvania is essential to several industries
    - These industries include Agriculture where undocumented workers account for almost 9% of the annual output and Construction and Manufacturing where these workers are responsible for 2% of the output. Undocumented workers are also well represented in the Leisure and Hospitality industry where they represent 3% of the annual output. These labor contributions could be facilitated and increased through the expansion of Driver's Licenses.
  - With this policy change, Pennsylvania could expect to see a \$13 million increase in revenue over the next three years from taxes, registration fees, license fees and vehicle-related purchases. This includes:
    - \$3.5 million from taxes on vehicle-related consumption and sales
    - \$4.6 million from additional liquid fuels taxes
    - \$1.9 million from vehicle registration fees
    - \$2.9 million from license fees (\$35.50 per new license) This is a positive increase in state revenue which is important to note, given our current recession.
    - Also important to note is that these estimates include revenues from car-related sales, registrations and licenses. As more families are mobile, the effects will spill over to positive impacts on the local economy and communities as economic contribution becomes easier for the undocumented population.
    - And of course, this is in addition to the economic contributions undocumented workers already make to the state... our state's undocumented population makes a YEARLY contribution of \$135 million in state and local taxes (includes sales and excise tax, property taxes and personal income tax). Alongside entrepreneurial contributions and labor contributions to all of Pennsylvania's industries but especially agriculture.
- There would be other benefits to this policy change outside of increased tax revenue.
  - Expanding licenses leads to insurance savings. When more people are covered, there are less accidents involving uninsured drivers, which reduces insurance rates for everyone and out-of-pocket expenses surrounding crashes.
  - Expanding licenses will lead to safer streets by ensuring more drivers on the road have passed a driving test and taken instruction on Pennsylvania's driving and road safety laws.
  - And most important, expanding access to drivers' licenses will provide immeasurable benefits to thousands of individuals and families across Pennsylvania, leading to better access to grocery stores and healthy food, school and school activities for kids, better access to doctor's offices and access to health care (which is so critical during this pandemic), potentially more adequate housing, utility services and better employment opportunities.
- Summary: Expanding access to driver's licenses is good policy
  - It's good not only for undocumented residents in our state but for the entire population in the Commonwealth - it will allow members of our communities, our neighbors, to live with dignity, to access life's necessities and to provide for their families.

- It is good for our local businesses and our economy – we will see additional car purchases, car insurance and better job matching.
- It is good for our state - it will bring in additional revenue, it will lower insurance rates and will ensure our roads are safer.