

OREGON LAW CENTER

921 SW Washington St., Suite 516
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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 833
Before the Senate Business and Transportation Committee
April 11, 2013
Submitted by Monica Goracke

Chair Beyer and Members of the Committee:

I am an attorney for the Oregon Law Center. As you may know, the Oregon Law Center's mission is to achieve access to justice for vulnerable, low-income Oregonians and their communities. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon in support of SB 833.

Many of our clients experiencing poverty and homelessness are unable to obtain a drivers' license or other state identification. It is common to lose all your possessions, including personal vital records, in the course of becoming homeless or while on the street. In Oregon, this has happened to victims of domestic violence, people with mental illness, and people who have lost their jobs. They are in the midst of personal trauma and disaster. They are scrambling to meet their basic food, shelter and clothing needs. Some of these individuals will continue to drive without a license or insurance, especially in rural areas where there is no alternate transportation. This puts other drivers at risk and burdens us all with unnecessary costs.

Undocumented individuals also need drivers' licenses to get to work, take their children to school, and to supply their basic daily needs like clothing and food. These individuals are working in jobs that are critical to the economy of this state, such as construction, farm work, food service, and home health care. They often work the night shift and have to get to and from work early in the morning or very late at night. In addition, they often live in areas with little or no public transportation, which can be unsafe for pedestrians, especially with strollers or young children. Without a drivers' license or ID, undocumented individuals are even more afraid of the police, and avoid making reports to law enforcement even if they are victims of a crime. They are more isolated and vulnerable to people taking advantage of them.

Some of our clients pay other people with drivers' licenses to drive them around, stretching their already thin paychecks. Others take the risk and drive without licenses or insurance. Many we have spoken to are unhappy to be forced into this situation and would far rather drive lawfully and safely.

I encourage your support of this bill and thank you for your attention. I would be glad to answer any questions or to provide more information at the committee's request.

Sincerely,
Monica Goracke