



NORTHWEST FOREST WORKER CENTER

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April 15, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Transportation
From: Northwest Forest Worker Center
RE: House Bill 2015: Equal Access to Roads Act
Submitted to: jct.exhibits@state.or.us

Dear Co-Chair Senator Lee Beyer, Co-Chair Representative Caddy McKeown, and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation:

On behalf of the Northwest Forest Worker Center (NFWC), an organization that works with state agencies to ensure fair working conditions in Oregon forests, I urge you to support HB 2015. The NFWC works with tree planters, brush thinners, ecological restoration workers, harvesters of non-timber forest products, and others performing important work in Oregon's forests. HB 2015 addresses one of the top needs of the immigrant workers whose labor is relied upon by Oregonians: forest workers laboring under dangerous conditions to prevent catastrophic wildfires from sending Oregon's communities up in flames, farmworkers putting food on our tables, cooks and dishwashers serving us in restaurants, as well as other workers. Oregon took away access to driver's licenses based on legislation that was drafted by OFIR, a group that the Southern Poverty Law Center identifies as a hate-group. It is time that we do what is right and restore access to driver's licenses to all Oregon drivers.

Excluding Oregonians from the ability to get a driver's license because of their citizenship or immigration status causes communities to live in fear. There are real reasons that immigrants make the difficult choice to leave their homes and communities in order to come to the United States. Many of those reasons are based on political and economic policies that the federal government of the United States has enacted on their home countries, such as trade agreements that favor corporations while destroying the economies of their communities. Making life more difficult for immigrant workers does not address the root causes of migration; all it does is serve to re-victimize immigrants who are attempting to make a living and contribute to our state.

HB 2015 upholds Oregon values of fairness. It would make our communities and roads safer. Requiring all drivers, regardless of citizenship or immigration status, to pass a written safety exam and driver's test and provide proof of identity and insurance makes Oregon roads and communities safer for everyone. Currently, 13 states, including California and Washington, have laws similar to HB 2015. In those states, traffic accidents and hit-and-run incidents have decreased and the number of insured driver rates have increased significantly.

We believe that it is better for everyone when no one lives in fear. When specific communities are driven into the shadows, there are a host of negative repercussions. Through our work we see labor abuses committed against immigrant laborers who are afraid to speak out, we also see abuses committed against workers who are brought here legally to do the same work through H-2B visas which require the worker to exclusively work for the

employer that brought them. Being denied access to driver's licenses drives people into the shadows, it makes them afraid to report abuses to state agencies and it drives working conditions down for everyone.

This is why we support HB 2015 and encourage this committee to pass it. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carl Wilmsen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Carl" being more prominent than the last name "Wilmsen".

Carl Wilmsen
Executive Director

cc: Senator Jeff Golden
Representative Kim Wallen
Representative Pam Marsh
Representative Duane Stark