

April 15, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Transportation

From: Eva Galvez, MD, Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center

RE: House Bill 2015: Equal Access to Roads Act

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

My name is Dr. Eva Galvez, I am a family physician, and I live in Portland, Oregon. I am here today to urge you to support HB 2015, the Equal access to Roads Act (HB 2015).

As a family physician caring for families in Oregon for over 10 years, I believe that providing access to driver's licenses to all people in our state is a critical component for creating healthy families and communities. Too many times, I have witnessed my patient's experience exacerbations of their chronic illnesses and poor health outcomes all of which could have been mitigated or prevented by having the ability to drive safely to their medical appointments.

My most recent experience with this involved my 43 year female patient, mother of three young children, with uncontrolled diabetes and hypertension. Although this patient is able to drive, she cannot get a driver's license in our state because she is undocumented. Her medical care has been highlighted by a number of missed medical appointments and poor adherence to her medical treatments. After many years of this pattern, the patient's chronic medical conditions have worsened, and she will now have to start dialysis for kidney failure. She has shared with me the constant struggle of choosing health for herself against the risk of being stopped by the police for driving to her medical appointments without a drivers license.

But denying driver's licenses to all people in our state has a more far reaching health impact than I just described. My unique perspective allows me to see that there is also a profound psychological and emotional toll that this takes on families. By not allowing our families to drive, Oregon families are often isolated and disengaged from the community which leads to psychologic distress and consequently exacerbates health conditions. By allowing families to drive, families are more likely to engage in the community and create social networks, all of which clinicians now understand can buffer against the effects of psychological distress and are critical components for good health.

I urge you to join me in supporting this bill because I believe that the foundation for healthy communities involves access to medical care and strong relationships with family and community. By taking action today and ensuring that all drivers in Oregon have the opportunity to apply for a driver's license, we are taking a step towards building healthier families. When all families have the tools to thrive, the community is healthier and I believe that all Oregonians benefit. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Eva Galvez, MD  
Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center