

April 17, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Transportation
From: Nikki Mandell, Oregon resident & U.S. Citizen

RE: House Bill 2015 – Equal Access to Roads Act

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

I am writing to urge you to support the Equal Access to Roads Act, HB 2015.

A driver's license is, and should be, a license to drive a motor vehicle. This is its most important purpose. And, in keeping with this purpose, the key qualifier for a driver's license should be one's demonstrated ability to operate a motor vehicle safely and in accordance with rules of the road.

Eligibility for a driver's license should be based on the specific and relevant criteria identified in HB 2015:

- passing a written and driving test, and
- proof of identity and Oregon residency.

I understand that some people and anti-immigrant organizations are lobbying to retain citizenship as a requirement to obtain a driver's license in Oregon. I strongly object to restricting driving to citizenship status. This is both discriminatory and dangerous.

Tying access to a driver's license to citizenship status is a cruel way to repress people who are seeking to better their own and their families' lives in the face of a dysfunctional immigration system and unequal enforcement of immigration policies. A substantial number of the people who plant and harvest the foods we eat; care for our children, disabled, and elderly; roof our houses and care for our gardens are not citizens and everyone who benefits from their hard labor, directly or indirectly, knows this. Having come to rely on hard-working immigrants to do the difficult labor that few American citizens are willing to do, it is incumbent on our policy-makers to ensure that those same hard-working immigrants can move about their communities with dignity. Just like citizens, they need to drive a car to work, to the store, to take their children to school, to church.

Tying access to a driver's license to citizenship status is a danger to me. This kind of prohibition does not stop people from driving. But, it does ensure that many thousands of people drive on the same roads as I do, without having proven that they are safe drivers (have not passed the state's written and driving tests) and that they will not have insurance to cover my losses (as well as their own) in case of an accident.

I urge your committee, and the full Oregon legislature to support HB 2015 as it is fully consistent with the will and spirit of Oregon's voters (all US citizens) who overwhelmingly voted NO on measure 105 in the last statewide election. This majority sent a clear message that we want to live in a state and community that recognizes and respects the humanity and needs of all its residents without regard to citizenship.

Thank you -

Nikki Mandell

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