



OREGON
ASSOCIATION OF
NURSERIES

**Testimony before the Joint Committee on Transportation
House Bill 2015, relating to documents issued by the Department of Transportation
(driver's license)**

By Jeff Stone, Executive Director, Oregon Association of Nurseries
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Co-chairs Senator Beyer and Representative McKeown, Vice-Chairs Senator Boquist and Representative Noble, members of the committee, my name is Jeff Stone and I serve as the Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the top legislative priority for the nursery and greenhouse industry, House Bill 2015.

Five years ago, I was proud to be a leading voice in the effort to pass Senate Bill 833 and engaged and deployed one of the biggest coalition efforts in the state's history. Faith communities, business, immigrant rights advocates and unions all on one page. The effort was to make our roads safer. Our goal was to make our roads safer, but the immigration debate was the main reason for the subsequent referral to the ballot which overturned the law. However, the underlying need for the bill did not diminish - it only grew stronger.

It is estimated that our state is home to more than 300,000 immigrants, and one-third of them is undocumented. One in eight workers in Oregon is an immigrant and like many in agriculture, the nursery and greenhouse industry are reliant on those workers. For this reason, it is more critical now than ever to pass House Bill 2015. In 2013 we had not implemented Real ID and the options were few. This bill is what the OAN had originally designed as the most proper way to fix the issue, and I am pleased that it is before you tonight.

The Economic Footprint of the Nursery and Greenhouse Industry

The nursery and greenhouse industry is the state's second largest agricultural sector, and the industry ranks third in the nation, with over \$886 million in sales annually to customers in Oregon, the rest of the United States, and abroad. In fact, nearly 75% of the nursery stock grown in our state leaves our borders – with over half reaching markets east of the Mississippi River. The nursery industry employs over 22,000 full time workers

with an annual payroll over \$327 million. We send ecologically friendly green products out of the state and bring traded sector dollars back to Oregon.

Nursery association members represent wholesale plant growers, Christmas tree growers, retailers, and greenhouse operators. Our members are located throughout the state, with our largest nursery growing operations found in Clackamas, Marion, Washington, Yamhill and Multnomah Counties.

All Oregonians should be able to legally drive

All Oregonians, regardless if they are urban or rural, what documents they possess, need to be able to participate in the local economy and prove they can drive, get licensed and obtain auto insurance. Prior to 2008 and for decades before that – proving that you are a resident of the state, providing proof of your identity and the ability to pass the written and driving test was the standard. It made sense – learn how to drive and be safe on the roads.

HB 2015 is a logical follow-up to the Real ID bill the legislature passed in 2017. Now that we have a federally-compliant enhanced license, the regular Class-C license can go back to what it was before 2008 - a license to drive.

In the rural parts of our state, where agriculture is a major economic activity, farms rely on skilled labor, specifically workers who have learned the techniques to care for and harvest crops. Oregon's heavy reliance on specialty crops and nursery stock means we have the need for highly skilled workers familiar with our niche products. Often those workers are immigrants or migrant laborers.

The class C license has its limitations. Let's be perfectly clear on this – this license will not be able to be used to board an airplane, enter federal buildings, or any other accommodation that the new Real ID compliant enhanced license would allow. This is for driving only. The New Motor Voter program has safeguards to prevent erroneous voter registration, and the license protects against privacy concerns because DMV does not need to store digital copies of documents as required for Real ID. These are important modifications made in House Bill 2015.

A strong coalition supports House Bill 2015

The OAN was the first business organization to support this legislation. It is my association's top legislative priority. Several business organizations have endorsed HB 2015, including: Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association, Oregon Business and Industries, Oregon Farm Bureau, Providence Health and Services, Oregon Landscape Contractors Association, and the Oregon Winegrowers Association. Many in the faith community, immigrant rights and union advocates are supporting this common sense bill.

Oregon is not going out there alone

Washington State and California both offer licenses to residents regardless of legal presence. Oregon did so until 2008, when we attempted but never succeeded to comply

with Real ID. The licenses for people that cannot demonstrate or provide the proper documents were obtained in 2008 – and they expired in 2016.

The point is worth making again - HB 2015 is different than the 2013 bill. In 2013, the legislature passed SB 833, which created a 4-year "driver card" for people who couldn't prove legal presence. Now that we have a Real ID-compliant license, we don't need to create a new card.

Do not succumb to dragging this issue into the immigration debate

House Bill 2015 is about driving and making our roads safer. It is not about immigration.

The Congress and the federal government continue to fail the states on immigration. There is no organization in Oregon that works harder than OAN to deliver a comprehensive immigration reform package in Congress. We were close last year and fully supported a balanced bill that created a guest worker system, reasonably accounted for any undocumented individuals who are currently in the United States and had significant employer accountability. The issue of immigration is controversial, toxic and is being used as a blunt instrument to propagate fear. That rhetoric exacerbates the acute worker shortage agricultural operations are facing.

HB 2015 is not a solution to the country's immigration problems. Immigration policy is a federal issue, but out here in Oregon, thousands of miles from Washington DC, we know that immigration is also a state issue and a community issue. Immigrants – regardless of their immigration status – are woven into the fabric of our communities. Immigrant families who have been here for generations and those who just arrived are part of the economy, the culture and the complexion of our community.

If the worker is documented, that doesn't mean everyone in their family is. Getting to work, getting kids to school and the doctor, and being able to lead a normal, productive life as an Oregonian is the least the state can do when most immigration solutions are Congress's responsibility.

The time is now to pass House Bill 2015

The OAN believes that House Bill 2015 provides adequate time for the State of Oregon to enact the Real ID, which will be available in July 2020, and then make the necessary progress on the Class C license by the time it will be available on January 1, 2021.

The bill returns the Class C license to its original intent – to test and affirm competency on the road. It has built in protections to not impart any benefits of the Real ID compliant licenses and provides adequate privacy protections for Oregon residents. For the nursery industry this issue is simple – we need everyone on Oregon's roadways to be licensed and insured.

The Oregon Association of Nurseries urges the Joint Committee on Transportation to approve House Bill 2015. Thank you for your time and consideration.