

April 16, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Transportation
RE: House Bill 2015: Equal Access to Roads Act
From: Mario Ortiz Palafox

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

For the record, my name is Mario Ortiz Palafox and in my personal time, I am here in strong support of HB 2015, the Equal Access to Roads Act.

I am a community member in Woodburn, a rural, agricultural community. I am the son of a single mother, a Deferred Action for Early Childhood Arrival recipient and also a 4th grade teacher in Salem-Keizer Schools.

I have lived in Woodburn for 15 years and I have experienced and seen first hand the effects that a lack of driver licenses have, on my family, in my classroom and community.

As a DACA student, I have access to a driver license that I must renew every 2 year. Before my access to a limited term license, I had very limited options to transport myself when I was a student at Chemeketa Community College. **I still remember riding my bike 21 miles from Woodburn to Salem on 99E to get to my classes.** While there was a bus that went from Salem to Woodburn twice a day, the schedule did not align with my classes. **In rural Oregon, riding in the highway was unsafe to do.**

I was able to apply for a driver license when I qualified for the DACA program. Access to a drive license added a sense of relief to my already hectic and stressful life as a student and son. I was able to transport myself with more ease to Western Oregon University and proudly, became the first one in my family to graduate in 2016.

As the only one in my household who can drive, I also have a responsibility to drive my mom, a farmworker and restaurant worker, to and from work every single day and whenever she needs to go to the store.

Today, I am proud to be an educator in the Salem-Keizer Public Schools where I teach a class full of wonderful students. Some of my students come from low income and farmworker households. I often hear from their parents the effects of a driver license has on their children's education. Even my students know about their parents concerns over a driving license.

The ability to drive legally continues to be a core everyday need for many Oregon families, especially in rural, agricultural communities. I hope that my story and the stories of our families show the urgent need for driver licenses. I urge your support on HB 2015.

Sincerely,
Mario Ortiz Palafox
Woodburn, Oregon