



Public Testimony
House Judiciary Committee
Re: House Bill 7610
March 15, 2016

Submitted by The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty

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Good afternoon. My name is Rabbi Jeff Goldwasser.

I'm the senior Rabbi at Temple Sinai in Cranston and a member of the RI Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty steering committee. I am testifying today to express both my personal support and the strong support of our organization for House Bill 7610, a bill that would allow qualified undocumented immigrants to obtain drivers' licenses.

Personally, this is an issue that resonates deeply with me as a Jew. In a few weeks, on the festival of Passover, Jews across the world will read these words from the Haggadah: "In every generation, we are obliged to see ourselves as if we personally had come out of bondage in Egypt." I am obligated to see myself with the eyes of those who have come to this country as strangers. When I look at the way that our nation treats the millions of undocumented immigrants within our borders, I don't like what I see. I see laws and policies that seem to be formulated more out of fear than out of humanity; more out of ignorance than out of our objective self-interest.

In addition to expressing my own thoughts, I am speaking, today, on behalf of the Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty, a diverse coalition of religious communities and advocacy partners throughout the state who have come together to fight poverty.

The RI Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty fully supports House Bill 7610.

As you consider the bill before you, we ask that you consider several points:

- First, numerous other states have already successfully implemented such reforms. ~~Ten~~ Twelve states and DC all provide access to drivers' licenses or their equivalent to undocumented state residents. California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Vermont, Washington (state), and Washington, D.C., have all paved the way for Rhode Island.

- Second, not only would this bill help undocumented Rhode Islanders, as you will hear today; it would also help *all* Rhode Islanders, in two important ways:
 - Safety: Licensing all drivers helps increase traffic safety for everyone. Unlicensed drivers, nation-wide, are five times likelier to be involved in a fatal crash than licensed drivers, based on data provided by AAA Foundation. Undocumented Rhode Islanders, like all other drivers, would need to pass a driving test to get a license, ensuring that unfit drivers are kept off the roads.
 - Cost: Further, we anticipate that this legislation, if passed, would have a consumer-price benefit for all Rhode Islanders, as well. While we are not aware of any detailed studies looking at Rhode Island, specifically, testimony provided to Connecticut lawmakers considering a similar proposal (which was ultimately adopted into law) estimated that licensing undocumented drivers would reduce Connecticut insurance premiums by \$20 million per year. Fewer unlicensed drivers on the road helps push down car insurance costs for all drivers.
- Finally, and most significantly, from our standpoint, it is the morally right course of action. Across our varied and divergent faith traditions certain common themes echo consistently. Prominent among these religious themes is the call to hospitality. We are invited to love the stranger (for we were strangers, too!) and to do for others as we would have them do unto us.

Both faith and facts have moved us to be here today to strongly support this bill. We are asking for the committee's support, as well, in moving this bill forward.

Thank you for your public service and for your consideration of this important question.

FOLLOW-UP E-MAIL SENT MARCH 17:

Dear Chairman Keable, Vice Chairman DaCosta and Judiciary Committee Members,

Attached you will find an updated fact sheet.

Our earlier version of the fact sheet, submitted in paper copy to the committee on Tuesday, had an outdated statistic: since our initial research and preparation of materials, *two additional states have implemented a process for limited-use drivers' licenses for undocumented immigrants, bringing the current total up to twelve*. As Rabbi Goldwasser mentioned in his verbal testimony, those additional states are Delaware and Hawaii. I have attached a revised fact sheet that correctly reflects the two additional states that implemented such laws this winter.

We would like to thank you, again, for staying late and working hard to ensure a full hearing on this important issue. Your public service is appreciated!

Thanks,
Emily
