



Public Testimony
House Judiciary Committee
Re: Senate Bill 2333
May 5, 2016

Submitted by The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty

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Good afternoon. 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 Senate Bill 2333.

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

- First, numerous other states have already successfully implemented such reforms. Twelve states, Puerto Rico 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), Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico 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, nationwide, 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.