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Testimony Re: Senate Bill 153 Regarding Drivers' Licenses for Undocumented Immigrants
Senate Judiciary Committee
May 16, 2019
Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Thank you also to Senator Ciccone for sponsoring the bill and to the bill's co-sponsors: Senators Goodwin, Nesselbush, Conley, and Miller.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for Senate Bill 153 which would allow the Rhode Island Department of Motor Vehicles to issue driver's licenses and permits to applicants who are unable to establish lawful presence in the United States. This bill would build on the bill passed last year that required the Rhode Island Department of Motor Vehicles to issue motor vehicle operators' or chauffeurs' licenses to Rhode Island Dreamers – residents who were granted deferred action under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Executive Order of the Obama Administration.

Having driving privileges will offer some much-needed stability in the lives of license holders and the lives of their families because this bill would enable them to go to and from school and work and support their families and communities. Extending driving privileges to undocumented immigrants will also improve public safety on our roads because these drivers will have to take driver's tests and know the rules of the road and our state's traffic regulations.

As of November 2016, the National Conference of State Legislatures reported that twelve states and the District of Columbia had enacted laws to allow unauthorized immigrants to obtain a driver's licenses. These states—California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Vermont and Washington—issue a license if an applicant provides certain documentation, such as a foreign birth certificate, a foreign passport, or a consular card and evidence of current residency in the state.

I urge you to join these states and to support this very important bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

