



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT
ONE UNION STATION
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

Testimony Re: House Bill 5305 Regarding Drivers' Licenses for Undocumented Immigrants
House Judiciary Committee
March 17, 2021
Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Thank you also to Representative Williams for sponsoring the bill and to the bill's co-sponsors: Representatives Knight, Alzate, Batista, Giraldo, Morales, and Henriens.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for House Bill 5305 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 in 2018 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 February 2021, the National Conference of State Legislatures reported that 16 states and the District of Columbia had enacted laws to allow unauthorized immigrants to obtain a driver's licenses. This is four more states than just two years ago, and momentum on this issue is growing. These states—California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, 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.