

Safety First Coalition

We, the undersigned organizations, would like to express our concerns over attempts to restrict access to driver's licenses for undocumented immigrant taxpayers, including SB5407 and HB1577.

Every year for more than a decade, the Washington State legislature and our citizens have **rejected efforts to put inflammatory politics above sound policy** by restricting or eliminating access to driver's licenses for undocumented immigrant taxpayers. They have done this recognizing that **safety is the most important consideration**, and changing our sound policies around driver's licenses would harm every level of the economy from the family pocketbook to the state budget while overrunning our roads with unlicensed and uninsured drivers.

This year, at least six bills have been introduced that again propose to restrict who can get a driver's license. Some bills propose entirely eliminating access for undocumented immigrant taxpayers, while the others propose creating a two-tiered system, with those who cannot prove citizenship being issued a drivers' permit that is marked "not for identification purposes." Listed below are the **primary reasons why the Safety First Coalition and its 45 organizations believe that both of these approaches are bad policy that decrease safety on the roads for all residents of Washington and have severe negative implications for our economy.**

- **In a dire budget time, changing our drivers' license laws will cost the state \$6.4 million in the 2011-2013 biennium and \$23.1 million through 2017 (OFM fiscal note on HB1577).** The new identification requirements for driver's licenses will require new funds for training on immigration documents and result in additional time and resources spent on processing driver's license applications. In fact, in addition to costing a lot of money, HB1577 would "require three minutes of additional staff time per customer" at DOL facilities.
- **The two-tiered approach will keep undocumented immigrant taxpayers from getting licenses but not stop undocumented immigrant taxpayers from driving, since livelihoods and industries rely on workers who drive.** Undocumented immigrants will not get a license that is labeled "not for identification purposes," because it will brand them as undocumented and alert law enforcement and other individuals to their immigration status. The two-tiered license jeopardizes undocumented immigrant parents' ability to stay with their families and children and, thus, will not be widely used.
- **Eliminating or restricting drivers' licenses undermines public safety for all Washington state drivers.** The reality is that our roads are safest when we license as many drivers as possible and we ensure that they have insurance. According to the AAA Foundation, unlicensed drivers are five times more likely to be in a fatal car accident.
- **Denying drivers' licenses to the undocumented population drives up insurance premiums for ALL residents.** The New York State Department of Insurance estimated that expanding license access for the undocumented population would reduce the premium costs associated with uninsured motorist coverage by 34% and save New York drivers \$120 million.
- **State law enforcement and judicial efforts are undermined by drivers' license restrictions.** Driver's license restrictions cause immigrants—including domestic violence victims, victims of crime, or those who have information that is useful to law enforcement—to avoid contact with state and local law enforcement. Restrictions would also clog our courts with non-violent driving-without-a-license charges.

- **The Department of Licensing (DOL) already requires [proof of residency](#) for driver’s without social security numbers, so the bills will not have an impact on access to licenses for out-of-state drivers.** In a November 4 [press release](#), DOL announced it would begin requiring proof of residency for drivers without social security numbers.
- **Ensuring drivers’ licenses for all drivers enhances national security; eliminating or restricting drivers’ licenses for the undocumented population decreases security for all.** National security is enhanced when we can keep track of everyone who is here. Ironically, in 2005, the [Government Accountability Office](#) reported that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement found the driver’s license databases to be more current than the DHS database.
- **A two-tiered system will not work and will lead to the same consequences as elimination of driver’s licenses.** The reality is that the two-tiered system simply places a target on the back of undocumented immigrants by differentiating them from those who have regular driver’s licenses. The result: They won’t get drivers licenses and will go unlicensed and uninsured.

We urge the legislature to seriously consider the negative impact of SB5407 and HB1577 on our communities, families and shared prosperity as a state and oppose the bill. Please don’t hesitate to contact Toby Guevin at OneAmerica with any questions or concerns at 617.755.6207 or toby@weareoneamerica.org.

Sincerely,

ACLU – WA
 Asian Counseling and Referral Services
 Asian Pacific Cultural Center
 Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of King County
 Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Pierce County
 Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Snohomish County
 Casa Latina
 Children’s Alliance
 El Centro de La Raza
 Community 2 Community
 The Eastside Latino Leadership Forum
 Entre Hermanos
 Filipino Community of Seattle
 First Place
 First Thursday Seattle
 Forks Human Rights Group
 Fuse Washington
 Refugee and Immigrant Services Northwest
 Minority Executive Director’s Coalition
 Latina/o Law Student Association, Seattle
 University School of Law
 Latino/a Bar Association of Washington
 Latino Civic Alliance

Latino PAC
 Legal Voice
 Lutheran Public Policy Office
 Mujeres of the Northwest
 Non-profit Assistance Center
 Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
 OneAmerica
 Pueblo Unido por la Dignidad
 Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans
 Sea Mar Community Health Centers
 Statewide Poverty Action Network
 Racial Equity Team
 SEIU Healthcare 1199NW
 SEIU Local 6
 SEIU775NW
 SEIU925
 Social Work Immigration Alliance
 UAW Local 4121
 UFCW Local 21
 Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
 Washington Community Action Network!
 Washington Defender Association
 Washington State Labor Council