Updated: February 2019

*Expanding licenses for undocumented New York residents - who must follow the same process as everyone else - keeps families together and makes our roads safer.*

**NOTE:** In communicating around this issue at any point, the education piece around PROCESS for earning a driver’s license is absolutely critical and must be included: in order to earn a license, undocumented immigrants must follow the same process as every other driver applying for a license, which will include components like a pre-licensing or driver education course, passing a road test and providing proof of residency.

**Toplines:**

- Undocumented individuals should be able to earn a drivers license by being required to follow the same process as other New Yorkers to earn a license, including taking a pre-licensing or driver education course, passing a road test, and providing proof of residency.

- Every New Yorker who goes through the process and examination required by the State should be able to earn a drivers license, including undocumented immigrants. This will make our roads and highways safer and help prevent New York state children from being separated from their parents.

- Undocumented immigrant families should be able to safely take their kids to school, the doctor, and after-school care, just like everyone else, without the fear that their family could be separated and deported.

- This proposal would make New York State’s roads and highways safer for everyone by making sure drivers are properly licensed, registered, insured, and able to get their cars inspected.

**This Proposal Gives No Special Treatment to Anyone - Undocumented Individuals Would Need to Follow the Same Process and Face the Same Requirements as Everyone Else**

- This proposal makes sure that undocumented drivers are treated the same way and face the same requirements as everyone else. This proposal is a common-sense way to make sure all of New York State’s drivers follow the same rules – including getting properly licensed, registered, and insured.

- In order to obtain a license, applicants would:
  - **KEY:** Be required to take a pre-licensing or driver education course and pass a road test
  - Be required to provide proof of New York State residence
  - Be required to provide proof of identification issued by a foreign government
  - Have a label on their license displaying it is “Not for federal purposes”
  - Not be able to board planes using their driver’s licenses
Undocumented Families Should be Able to Safely Take Their Kids to School, the Doctor, and After-School Care

- This proposal will allow immigrant families who go through the process to earn a license, to drive their kids without fearing that any day their family could be pulled over and end up being separated by immigration authorities and deported.
- The proposal improves family safety, and will help prevent NY State children from being separated from their parents.
- Every day, New Yorkers are forced to make the terrible choice of driving without a license, or not being able to get to work or take their children to the doctor. No New Yorker should fear that they will be separated from their family because of a routine traffic stop.
- It's unconscionable that in 2019, immigrant and refugee residents of New York state are being rounded up and held in detention centers as a result of routine traffic stops.

Additional Background

Since 2001, proof of legal immigration status has been required to obtain a driver's license in New York State. Driving without a license is a misdemeanor during a routine traffic stop, but its enforcement is being used as a heavy-handed tactic to arrest and detain undocumented immigrants and refugees. This year, New York has an opportunity to join California, Nevada, Utah, and nine other states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico in creating a process to issue driver's licenses to undocumented residents.

Most undocumented immigrants would like to comply with federal immigration law but there is no legal option available to them to adjust their status until Congressional reform is implemented. Undocumented immigrants contribute to all facets of New York life, both socially and economically. They pay over $1.1 billion in state and local taxes annually and are responsible for $40 billion of New York’s economic output, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute. Granting access to standard driver’s licenses offer a practical solution that allows undocumented immigrants to comply with State law while the nation waits for reasonable and just federal immigration reform.

Driver's Licenses Are Good For Our Communities

- Driver's licenses can prevent a simple traffic infraction from resulting in arrest and tragic deportation. Undocumented immigrants, who must drive to reach work, worship, or school can do so with less risk, which will allow them to participate and contribute more fully to local community life
- Issuing licenses to undocumented New York residents would increase financial stability for families.

Driver's Licenses Are Good For Public Safety
Public safety improves for everyone - immigrants and citizens alike - when all drivers can pass a variety of written knowledge and road tests, become licensed, purchase insurance and operate a properly licensed and registered vehicle.

More licenses means greater safety for all New York residents on the road. For example, since the state of New Mexico passed legislation in 2003 that granted licenses to undocumented residents, the state has experienced significant drops in both its traffic fatality rate and the rate of uninsured vehicles traveling on its roads.

Expanding access to driver’s licenses will allow law enforcement officers to concentrate on true public safety priorities, instead of wasting time and resources bringing unlicensed drivers to stations for booking.

**Driver’s Licenses Are Good For the New York Economy**

- Providing licenses would help make it easier for undocumented immigrants to open bank accounts, pay taxes, and secure better jobs. Licenses are particularly important for workers in suburban and rural areas without readily available public transportation options; this is critical for New York’s agricultural sector.

- Providing licenses makes good economic sense for New York: if the state were to expand access to driver’s licenses to undocumented immigrants, it would receive an estimated $57 million in combined annual revenues and $26 million in one-time revenues.

- State-issued identification will allow undocumented New Yorkers more opportunity to financially integrate into the formal banking system and build their family’s savings and economic security.

**Q&A**

- **Opponents say the Green Light bill will make it easier for non-citizens to vote. How do you respond?**
  - This is the same baseless scare tactic that opponents have deployed in every state that has considered this kind of legislation, and it’s flatly untrue - the ID that would be issued would not include a valid ID number for voter registration. Every ID would also be clearly marked as invalid for federal uses, meaning it couldn’t be used to register to vote. Non-citizen voting remains a myth across the country, as confirmed by repeated, nationwide studies.
  - The fact is that this bill makes our roads safer and improves economic mobility and family safety for the undocumented New Yorkers who already contribute more than $1.1 billion in state and city taxes every year. With a driver’s license, these New Yorkers could seek better opportunities, purchase cars, open bank accounts, and finally be allowed to contribute fully to the state’s economy.