

Broad Coalition of Elected Officials and Advocates Unveil Analysis of Granting Driver's Licenses to Undocumented New Yorkers

New Reports by New York City Comptroller Stringer and Fiscal Policy Institute Show Expanding Driver's Licenses Would Benefit All New Yorkers

Policy Would Increase Economic Mobility, Improve Road Safety, and More than Pay for Itself

Coalition of Leaders and Advocates Led by New York Immigration Coalition Kicks Off "Green Light NY: Driving Together" Campaign to Push Expansion of Access to Driver's Licenses

(New York, NY) – New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer, the New York Immigration Coalition, the Fiscal Policy Institute, elected officials and immigration advocates today the release of new analyses of the fiscal costs and benefits of expanding access to driver's licenses to all New Yorkers, without regard to immigration status, and the launch of a new campaign announced, *Green Light NY: Driving Together*. The announcement of the campaign comes from advocates and elected officials as Comptroller Stringer and the Fiscal Policy Institute release comprehensive reports highlighting the significant social and economic benefits of extending driving privileges to undocumented immigrants. The analyses found that the policy change would help support immigrant families by expanding job opportunities, while modestly lowering insurance premiums for all state drivers and improving public safety on roadways, with the fiscal costs of implementing the proposal more than offset by added revenues. The Comptroller's report documented these findings for New York City, while the report from the Fiscal Policy Institute notes the impact of these benefits across upstate New York.

Assemblyman Francisco Moya is preparing to introduce a new bill in the Assembly that would expand driver's license privileges to undocumented immigrants living in New York State. The case in support of the new legislation is bolstered by the findings of the dual reports, which highlight benefits both in New York City and in Upstate New York. With the recent executive actions on immigration signed by President Trump, there is an additional imperative to allow undocumented immigrants the choice to receive a license. The new bill will require data not be stored in perpetuity and that any request for this information by an outside party be accompanied by a judicial warrant. Comprehensive legislation codifying the expansion of driving privileges will be formally proposed in the coming weeks.

According to Comptroller Stringer's report, there are approximately 570,000 undocumented New Yorkers living across the five boroughs. These undocumented residents already contribute to the tax base in the City and State, but because they cannot legally drive, they are more restricted in their job prospects, face longer commutes which can limit parents' time with their children, and live in fear of deportation.

"The time is right for our state to make this change. When backwards rhetoric and backwards policymaking are pouring out of Washington, this is a forward-looking proposal for New York State to meaningfully empower communities that need our support. Granting licenses is not just

a statement of our values – it’s practical because it makes our roads safer, brings immigrants out of the shadows, and saves everyone money,” **Comptroller Scott M. Stringer** said. “Implementing this proposal will cement our legacy as a City and a State that welcomes immigrants. It is, simply, the right thing to do.”

Steven Choi, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition said, “In a time when communities are fearful about the hostile anti-immigrant climate being created by the federal government, it is more important than ever to ensure our state supports the immigrant communities that make New York strong. By expanding driver’s licenses to all New Yorkers regardless of immigration status, our campaign can improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers, ensure that everyone can be properly licensed and certified with an inspected and insured vehicle, and will drop insurance premiums for everyone and result in increased revenue for the state. By expanding driver’s licenses to all, the State will be enhancing public safety, providing a strong avenue to inclusion for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, and boosting economic growth, an overall win for all.”

“Expanding access to driver’s licenses would be a big improvement in the lives of some of the hardest-working and hardest-pressed New Yorkers,” said **David Dyssegaard Kallick, director of the Fiscal Policy Institute’s Immigration Research Initiative**. “The policy will pay for itself, and it will bring some improvements in the lives of everyone else—from slightly lower auto insurance rates to a modest boost in the local economy to higher tax revenues to county and state governments and a little added to the state’s public transportation authorities as well.”

“With President Trump’s relentless attacks on immigrant communities, it is more important than ever before to make it clear that New York is a state which welcomes immigrants, and a state where immigrant families can succeed. Outside of cities with mass transportation, undocumented immigrants are at a serious disadvantage without driver’s licenses, making simple tasks like picking up groceries, picking up a child from school or going to work a struggle. I’m proud to announce that I’ve introduced legislation that would finally allow undocumented immigrants to qualify for a driver’s license. It is time to take a stand, say that bigotry is not welcome in New York, and remove the needless roadblocks immigrants face so they can provide for their families,” said **Assemblyman Francisco P. Moya**.

Javier H. Valdés, Co-Executive of Make the Road New York, which has 20,000 immigrant members in Long Island and New York City, said: “As Donald Trump pursues every available avenue to terrorize immigrant and refugee communities, New York State must step up and become a safe haven. The state currently prevents hundreds of thousands of otherwise-qualified New Yorkers from obtaining a license because of their immigration status. This puts many immigrants—who, in many parts of the state like Long Island and the Hudson Valley, need to drive to get to work, drop kids at school, or get to a doctor’s office—at risk of traffic stops that could lead to arrest and deportation. Given President Trump’s vow to tear apart immigrant families that have had any contact with law enforcement, New York urgently needs to protect its immigrant community by restoring access to drivers’ licenses to all.”

Rey Morales, an Orange County Member with Community Voices Heard who would benefit from accessing a driver’s license stated, "I feel intimidated by the politics of the new

administration. I feel that all that is happening affects us and impedes our advancement on our path. I believe the fight will be stronger now and we need to reinvent our plans and strategy. We must continue to fight for licenses in NY because that way we will be better protected and we can protect our families. A license is a shield against racism and discrimination."

Yobani Bravo, Member, Workers' Center of Central New York who would also benefit from acquiring a driver's license, "It is very important for us to have a driver's license so we can get to our work safely and we can respond to emergencies; when a cop stops you, that is the first thing they ask you, and when we don't show it, we can get into trouble. It is also important because if we have a driver's license makes everybody else more safe. It is not fair that we contribute to this country so much and we don't have the right to driver's license. This campaign will show people how many of us are unable to drive, but also how any of us are fighting for that right."

Luis Jiménez, member, Alianza Agrícola spoke about how a driver's license would change his livelihood, "The power of freedom of movement is a need and not a privilege. We all need to be able to move freely without fear. It is not a luxury that we want - it is something that require to live a life without fear. As a father raising children who were born here, I want them to enjoy the same rights and privileges as everyone else. It is sad to tell them, I can't take you to basketball practice. I can't take you here or there. So for that reason we are fighting and asking for a change. We want more respect for the immigrant community and the opportunity for equal rights in New York because we are human beings and we work hard and contribute to the New York economy."

"When I was a child, my undocumented mother risked deportation every day driving me to school so I could receive the education I was entitled too," said **Mayra Hidalgo Salazar, Executive Director, Hudson Valley Community Coalition**. "No mother should have to go through that. Equal access to a drivers' license will not only keep our roads safer but it will help ensure families stay together in the face of increasing risk. While immigrants are under attack from the federal government, New York State must do everything in its power to protect ALL its residents and provide immigrants the resources and tools needed for them to thrive. A driver's license is one step closer in the right direction."

"For farmworkers and other isolated immigrant workers living in rural communities throughout Upstate New York, having a driver's license is absolutely essential to ensuring access to basic necessities," said **Lewis O. Papenfuse, Executive Director, Worker Justice of New York**. "When workers must rely on employers to purchase their groceries or provide them with rides to the doctor, their bosses gain control over virtually all aspects of their lives. As an organization that aims to protect vulnerable workers from exploitation and abuse, we see driver's license access as an important workers' rights and human rights issue."

Nikeeta Slade, Organizer with the Workers' Center of Central New York said, "Now, more than ever, we need to fight and push for policies that show that immigrants, regardless of their status, are welcomed here and important members of our community. Fighting for drivers licenses for all is one important way immigrant worker members of the Workers' Center of CNY have been doing this important work."

According to the Comptroller's report, currently 12 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico grant drivers licenses to undocumented immigrants. Implementing the policy would allow 150,000 undocumented immigrants in New York City to receive licenses and provide the following benefits:

- **Increased Economic Mobility for Families** — The ability to legally drive will provide these New Yorkers with greater access to higher paying jobs, as well as strengthen families by making it easier for parents to drive their children to and from school.
- **Increased Revenues Would Offset Program Costs** — Up to \$9.6 million in driver's license fees would be gained by New York State. An additional \$1.3 million would go to the MTA in license fees.
- **Higher Auto Industry Sales** — Sales in the auto industry would increase by 2.7%, generating tens of millions of new dollars for the state in registration and title fees, as well as vehicle and gasoline sales taxes.
- **Lower Auto Insurance Premiums** — According to a recent study, preventing immigrants from obtaining driver's licenses increases annual insurance expenditures for licensed drivers by \$17.22 per person. Changing New York State policy would deliver savings to New York City's 3.6 million licensed drivers in future years.
- **Improvements in Public Safety** — When all drivers learn the rules of the road and purchase insurance policies, the broader public benefits.

According to the Fiscal Policy Institute's report, revenues from expanding access to driver's licenses, which would increase the number of people buying cars and purchasing licensing fees, would more than cover expenses to the Department of Motor Vehicles. The report details how greater access to driver's licenses would create additional revenues for public transportation authorities and especially benefit state and county governments.

FPI's report also finds that from Long Island to the Lower Hudson Valley to Western New York – all areas where cars are more necessary to own to access jobs and participate in the economy – the benefits of expanding driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants would help improve economic conditions for undocumented immigrants, be a net positive for the local economy, and would even add some to local budgets and the upstate regional transit authorities. Collectively, undocumented residents already pay about \$1.1 billion in state and local taxes annually.

Key findings from the Fiscal Policy Institute on new revenues from expanding driver's licenses in upstate New York include:

- 265,000 people who would get driver's licenses within three years, including 51,000 on Long Island, 53,000 in the Hudson Valley, and 11,000 in Northern and Western New York.
- \$57 million in combined annual government revenues, plus \$26 million more in one-time revenues.

- \$28 million in annual revenues to New York State, \$21 million to county governments, \$8.6 million to the MTA (in addition to another \$2.2 million in one-time revenue), and \$288,000 to upstate mass transportation authorities.
- Further detail about upstate metro areas is available in the report.

In order to realize these benefits, Comptroller Stringer, Assemblyman Moya, the New York Immigration Coalition and coalition partners recommend that New York State adopt legislation that would allow all immigrants to obtain licenses and launch a targeted public awareness campaign to educate eligible immigrants about the program.

“Hard-working families deserve a chance to realize the American Dream,” said Comptroller Stringer. “Granting driver’s licenses is an important step forward for the New Yorkers who contribute so much to our City.”

To see the Comptroller’s full report, [click here](#).

To view the full report from the Fiscal Policy Institute, [click here](#).

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