

Driving Together: How Syracuse Gains if All New Yorkers Can Apply for Licenses

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THIS YEAR, NEW YORK STATE GOVERNMENT IS FINALLY REVISITING the question of allowing all state residents, including undocumented immigrants, to apply for a driver's license. Until 2003, New York State allowed residents to apply for driver's licenses without regard to their immigration status. New York should follow the example of the 12 other states—plus Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico—that currently make it possible for all residents who pass the driver's test and meet other requirements to get a license.

Syracuse would see clear benefits if New York allows everyone to apply for a license:

- **Everyday tasks such as getting to work, shopping for groceries, or picking up kids from school will be vastly easier** for the 1,000 immigrants in the Syracuse metro area who FPI estimates would get a license if permitted.
- **The roads are safer for everyone if all drivers are tested, licensed, and insured.** Having to pass a driving test can make people better drivers. Across-the-board access to licenses reduces problems when traffic incidents occur.
- **Employers benefit when everyone can drive.** Access to licenses would particularly help the farm industry, and overall it would give the Syracuse economy a small boost by improving the match between employers and employees.
- **The proposal would more than pay for itself.** In New York, driver's license fees, by design, cover the cost of producing the license and even generate some revenue to public transit agencies. As more people buy cars, they would also pay more in gas tax and other taxes. County governments in Northern and Western New York would see a combined gain of \$3.1 million per year from the county component of sales tax and vehicle use tax fees.
- **New York auto insurance rates would go down by about \$17 per year** when more drivers are insured. That's not the reason to support this measure, but it's a nice side benefit to improving the lives of New York's immigrants: enough to buy a bouquet of flowers on Mother's Day!



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