



March 25, 2019

Dear Members:

Peace be with you. We, the bishops of the Minnesota Catholic Conference, write in support of H.F. 1500, which will provide a pathway for our undocumented brothers and sisters to obtain driver's licenses. Enacting this legislative proposal is long overdue; there is urgency to act.

Re-opening our license system will allow Minnesota to address one component of our broken immigration system. Our immigrant brothers and sisters need reforms to ensure that they are not confined to the shadows and margins of our society. Apart from federal comprehensive immigration reform, offering driver's licenses is one small measure the State of Minnesota can employ to make our roads safer and our communities more welcoming to the immigrants who already make important contributions to our economic, cultural, and social life.

Access to driver's licenses will help many immigrants meet their daily obligations. In many parts of Minnesota, there is no public transportation, and undocumented persons have no ability to get to work, church, health services, or school, other than by driving illegally. Every day, they live in fear that getting stopped could mean permanent separation from their children, spouse, or parents.

In our parishes that serve many undocumented persons and their families, the inability to drive, or doing so without a license, is a major source of stress. Undocumented immigrants who have been able to obtain a license are now not able to do so because of new rules at the DMV requiring social security numbers.

Most of us cannot begin to imagine what loss of movement, or the fear of being deported and separated from our families while doing so, would mean in our lives. It is a terrible fear to impose on people and families in our community. And we must do something about it for our brothers and sisters.

Providing driver's licenses to immigrants also serves the common good—it is surely in the best interests of our state to have people who are living among us and driving on our roads be able to do so safely and legally. In a number of states where similar “noncompliant” licenses have been created, such as Utah and New Mexico, the rates of uninsured motorists declined.

This legislation does not “reward” those who have broken the law. Providing driver's licenses is a concrete measure of solidarity that takes into account the complexity of the immigration issue. It seeks to protect the well-being of undocumented persons considering the reality of their situation and actual prospects for immigration reform and enforcement. There is little likelihood that most of Minnesota's

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90,000 immigrants will be deported—immigrants who pay taxes and serve in their churches and communities. Therefore, how can we both respond to their needs and promote the common good?

We hope today that we as Minnesotans follow the most common biblical moral exhortation—to welcome the stranger—and remember that our families, too, were once strangers in this land who arrived with the same hopes that our undocumented community has today. Though Congress has failed, we hope we can do something meaningful and important for thousands of immigrants in our midst.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the people of Minnesota.

Respectfully yours,

The Most Rev. Bernard A. Hebda, Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis

The Most Rev. Michael J. Hoeppner, Bishop of Crookston

The Most Rev. John LeVoir, Bishop of New Ulm

The Most Rev. John M. Quinn, Bishop of Winona-Rochester

The Most Rev. Paul D. Sirba, Bishop of Duluth

The Most Rev. Donald J. Kettler, Bishop of St. Cloud

The Most Rev. Andrew H. Cozzens, Auxiliary Bishop of St. Paul & Minneapolis