



MINNESOTA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

May 19, 2016

Dear REAL ID Conference Committee Members:

Peace be with you. I write today to ask that, as you negotiate SF 3589 (REAL ID), you not include the language regarding “lawful status” found on Line 6.14 of the House version of the bill. With the inclusion of this provision, it appears that some lawmakers are trying to use the REAL ID bill to end dialogue around the possibility of administrative rule-making that would allow undocumented persons to obtain provisional driver’s licenses.

Allowing for future compromise or rule-making on immigrant driver’s licenses will allow Minnesota to take action where our federal government has failed. Our immigrant brothers and sisters need reforms to ensure that they are not confined to the shadows and margins of our society. We are not going to deport *en masse* undocumented persons, so we need to consider concrete ways in which we can bring them into greater participation in our society. Absent federal comprehensive immigration reform, offering driver’s licenses is one small measure the State of Minnesota can employ that will 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 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.

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.

Undoubtedly, immigration policy is complicated. As we seek to uphold the dignity of every human person created in the image and likeness of God, we must not ignore the common good, particularly the reality that with rights and privileges come responsibilities. But let’s not prematurely foreclose the possibility of further dialogue around administrative rule-making that can protect the poor and vulnerable as well as create safer, more welcoming communities.

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

Respectfully yours,

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