



**LAWYERS FOR
CIVIL RIGHTS
BOSTON**

Testimony Before Transportation Committee

Good morning. My name is Lauren Sampson. I am an attorney and civil rights fellow at Lawyers for Civil Rights (LCR), formerly the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice. Founded at the height of the civil rights movement, our mission is to foster equal opportunity and fight discrimination on behalf of people of color and immigrants.

Our Commonwealth is home to vibrant and diverse communities, whose population growth is driven by increases in immigrant population. In 2014, for example, Boston's foreign-born residents accounted for almost 30% of the city's population; the city has the seventh highest share of foreign-born residents among the largest U.S. cities, and more than half of Boston children under the age of 18 lived with at least one foreign-born parent.

We urge the Commonwealth to follow the lead of thirteen other states and the District of Columbia by enacting the Work and Family Mobility Act to enable any applicant, regardless of immigration status, to obtain a standard driver's license. As lawyers, we know – and can reassure you – that the Commonwealth has the power and authority to grant these licenses.

The benefits extend far beyond each individual driver. In Connecticut, for example, the issuance of “drive only” licenses to residents resulted, over four years, in a nearly 10% decrease in hit and runs, millions of dollars in revenue to the state's motor vehicles agency and driving schools, and improved relations between law enforcement and immigrants.

In working with immigrants with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), a humanitarian program being dismantled by the Trump Administration, I have seen first-hand the significant barriers they have experienced renewing their Massachusetts driver's licenses, and the toll it can take on a family. In transit deserts—which overlap significantly with immigrant and low-income communities—the lack of a driver's license can mean losing your income from Lyft or Uber. You can't drive to a job interview, to a child's soccer game, or to a doctor's appointment.

But if Massachusetts extends these licenses, immigrants will be better able to access education, healthcare, and well-paying jobs. They will be trained and tested for driving; they will purchase insurance and take lessons. They will have identification to provide to police in the event of a traffic stop or accident.

Massachusetts prides itself on being welcoming and inclusive. But the present barriers to obtaining a driver's license unnecessarily shut thousands of immigrants out of our economy. We urge this Committee to act, to do what we should have done years ago. We call upon this body to pass the Work and Family Mobility Act and to ensure everyone is able to participate in the life of this community.