

To: Joint Committee on Transportation
From: Mary C. King, Professor of Economics Emerita, Portland State University
Re: House Bill 2015: Equal Access to Roads Act
Date: April 15, 2019

Co-Chair Senator Lee Beyer, Co-Chair Representative Caddy McKeown, and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

My name is Mary King. I'm a Professor of Economics Emerita at Portland State University. I am unable to attend the hearing, so write to urge you to support HB 2015.

I base this recommendation on my experience leading a substantial research project for the Oregon Department of Transportation, titled the "Assessment of the Socio-Economic Impacts of SB 1080 on Immigrant Groups," released by ODOT in 2011.
(<https://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/Programs/ResearchDocuments/SB1080.pdf>)

That report was commissioned to gain an understanding of the social and economic consequences of the loss of access to Oregon Driver's Licenses by those unable to demonstrate their legal presence in the United States.

At the time, some 140,000 unauthorized immigrants were estimated to be living in Oregon, approximately 97% of whom were thought to be Latino, nearly all of Mexican origin. More than two-thirds were members of the labor force – and a particularly large share of workers in crop production, agriculture support, textile mills, and food production. We forecast a hit to the Oregon economy over the years, particularly in these industries, as the economy recovered from the severe recession of 2008, and as people holding valid driver's licenses were unable to renew them.

To understand the social impacts, we interviewed nearly 400 Spanish-speaking migrants, and reached out to the staff of social service agencies, employers and law enforcement. The social consequences of SB 1080 we discovered were concentrated primarily on undocumented immigrants and their families—many of which include legal residents. They were

- a) experiencing difficulty with the many circumstances that require ID;
- b) changing their driving habits and daily routines, often calling on U.S.-born children to drive;
- c) facing restricted opportunities in the labor market; and
- d) losing access to education, medical care, church attendance and recreation.

Law enforcement personnel reported a conflict between enforcing the law and community policing strategies, which depend on the cooperation of the community. Many migrants reported stress and uncertainty, especially fearing deportation resulting from a traffic stop. Clearly a significant number of people were driving without a valid driver's license and without insurance. Others were obtaining a Washington driver's license, or being lured into purchasing a useless "international driver's license."

In short, significant numbers of Oregon employers rely on an immigrant labor force without documents; workforce instability is a burden on employers. Restoring access to driver's licenses will improve safety on our roads, enhance the prospects of the US citizen children of migrants and regularize life in our communities. Restricting our state's licensing of drivers is a poor means of conducting immigration policy, and out of step with Oregon's bi-partisan establishment of Oregon as a sanctuary state thirty-two years ago in 1987.