

Date: May 18, 2023

To: Joint Committee on Transportation: Co-Chairs McLain & Fredrick, Co-Vice Chairs Boquist & Boshart-Davis, and members of the Committee

From: Jasmin Alvarez, Commissioner, Washington County Sheriff's Office Latino Advisory Commission

Re: Support HB 2951-1 - Spanish Driver's Education

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony supporting HB 2951-1; I am Jasmin Alvarez, Washington County Sheriff's Office Latino Advisory Commission Commissioner.

2021 was significant for our community of undocumented/non-citizens of Oregon. Undocumented/non-citizens could safely obtain driver's licenses and drive more confidently. It showed that Oregon acknowledged those in our community who are undocumented and the need to drive safely in cooperation with the regulations set by the state.

Extending accessibility and implementing a pilot program for Spanish-speaking driver's education helps break down barriers our communities face when attempting to obtain their driver's licenses.

While 2021 allowed those with undocumented status the opportunity to obtain a driver's license, it did not erase the fear of interacting with the government. The fear of applying is still real and based on shared community experiences. For the increasing number who choose to overcome this anxiety with governmental institutions to acquire a driver's license, they are met with inadequate resources to aid them in passing the required tests. Additionally, most resources for driver's education are available in English. I wanted to translate all of these materials for our community. However, I quickly became aware that I need to improve my proficiency. This is an issue of poor accessibility to our most vulnerable communities. Simply put, the burden should not fall on me or community members, and the state should bridge the gaps for the communities most impacted.

Centro has fifty years of experience working with the Latino community, and I am confident that they will ensure this program is successful and that this pilot program could also impact the STOP data.

When you think about the pros and cons of this bill, consider our most vulnerable community members, in this case, Spanish speakers.

If they cannot find the resources to help them pass the driver's education test, retaking the test may be financially challenging. The need to provide for their families and the potential loss of income from taking time off to retake the test further complicates the situation, if they have the confidence to go through the process again. An Oregon Driver's License should not be a burden to access; please support HB 2951-1 because Oregon's Spanish speakers need this now.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter,

Jasmin Alvarez,  
WCSO Commissioner (PCC Student)  
Hillsboro Resident