



**OPAL**  
Environmental Justice Oregon

[opalpdx.org](http://opalpdx.org)

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April, 17 2019

Joint Committee on Transportation  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2015

Co- Chair Beyer, Co- Chair McKeown, Vice-Chair Boquist, Vice-Chair Noble and Members of Committee.

OPAL builds power for environmental justice and civil rights in our communities where we live, work, learn, play and practice spirituality. We advocate for a just transportation system, inclusive housing and investment without displacement, health equity, and empowered, engaged communities who enjoy equitable access to lifeline services. The Equal Access to Roads Act (House Bill 2015) is the right thing to do for all Oregonians.

Our members are primarily transit riders who are unable to access other forms of mobility due to their economic status, disability, age or legal ability to attain a driver's license. On their behalf, we write to urge the passage of HB 2015.

HB 2015 will bring concrete benefits to our communities. Access to transportation is a social determinant of health. A driver's license provides an individual and their family access to jobs, food, education, and medical services. Equitable access to a driver's license is also a public health issue. Providing the opportunity for Oregonians to drive legally is a core everyday need for many Oregon families as our communities continue to be pushed further and further to the fringes of living thriving lives.

Oregon currently falls behind the 13 other states who grant similar transportation and human rights to our communities to be able to drive safely as represented in HB 2015. Excluding Oregonians from the ability to get a driver's license because of their citizenship or immigration status puts our neighbors at risk and makes it harder for them to care for themselves and build a better life for their families. This adds to health impacts of stress, from fear of not being able to make it back to their families on a day-to-day basis. Research indicates that higher levels of difficulty or distress among immigrant individuals when compared to non-immigrants is persistent. The stress of such impacts shortens lifespans and suppresses immune systems. We need solutions, such as HB 2015 that are able to remove barriers and create benefits to those impacted and ultimately all Oregonians.

Extending driver licenses to all Oregonians regardless of citizenship status is the right thing to do. The state policy also offers anti-discrimination language to ensure no one is targeted for having this class of license and provides protections to ensure a person's information is not shared with federal government will improve public



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safety. The right policy will require drivers to take test and properly register motor vehicles with the state. Licensed drivers are more likely to obtain auto insurance, reducing the cost of accidents involving uninsured motorists and potentially lowering insurance rates for everyone.

Granting driver's licenses to all Oregonians will make our communities safer. Our communities experience risk while driving without a license to attend to day-to-day lifeline services. In Oregon 80,000 to 100,000 individuals would benefit from driver's license expansion. Additionally, the legislature can direct state resources to better priorities if courts and jails are less congested by issues arising from driving without a license or insurance, such as civil violations, criminal charges, and jail time. Racial justice requires us to work toward the reduction of judicial contact for communities of color who are more likely to face harsher targeting, prosecution, sentencing and longer times incarcerated and/or detained. With the permission to drive safely and legally to work, school, and elsewhere, immigrant families can participate more fully in their community without the constant fear of being stopped by the police.

Driver's licenses can serve as a form of identification that allows immigrant families to live more visibly in society with greater access to financial institutions, medical care, and other basic services. To quote Jose Antonio Vargas, famous undocumented journalist "For the undocumented, "a driver's license is not only a driver's license, it's proof that you exist."<sup>1</sup>

We urge, to please pass HB 2015 and stand with the thousands of Oregonians who for too long have been denied the opportunity to drive but ultimately to the many other opportunities that are attached to having driver license includes.

We must not miss the opportunity to send a strong message that human rights are for everyone and provide immediate relief to our communities. **HB 2015 is a bill about fairness, public safety and environmental justice.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Maria Hernandez Segoviano  
Policy and Advocacy Manager

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<sup>1</sup> "Why Undocumented Immigrants Need Driver's Licenses," Jose Antonio Vargas, *BuzzFeed* (Oct 31, 2013), available at: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/joseiswriting/why-undocumented-immigrants-need-drivers-licenses>.