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## **Driver's Privilege Card for Virginia's Immigrants 2019 General Assembly Proposal**

The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP) is working to make Virginia a more welcoming and equitable place, with increased access to opportunities for all communities. As people of faith, we share the foundational values of loving our neighbors, caring for the vulnerable and uplifting the marginalized members of our communities. VICPP advocates legislative solutions to end the barriers that our neighbors face. Creating a Driver's Privilege Card for immigrants is one important step to welcome immigrants in Virginia.

### **What is a Driver's Privilege Card?**

A Driver's Privilege Card is a special card that allows immigrants who are not eligible for a regular Virginia Driver's License to learn Virginia's driving laws, pass the driver's test, and get a card that allows them to drive legally on Virginia's roads. The Driver's Privilege Card would look different from a regular license, so it could not be used to vote or as identification for other functions reserved for citizens or other legal residents.

### **Why is a Driver's Privilege Card needed?**

In most parts of Virginia, driving is a necessity. Most Virginia residents drive to work, to school, religious services and shopping. Residents who are undocumented generate more than \$256 million in state and local taxes.<sup>i</sup> Allowing tax-paying Virginians to drive to and from work can only increase tax revenue for our state.

### **What are the Benefits of Creating a Driver's Privilege Card?**

The roads are safer for *all* Virginians when we all meet the same standards of knowledge and skill. Without access to driving privileges, undocumented residents of Virginia – who must and do drive with or without authorization for the reasons given above – do not meet the standards of accountability to which licensed drivers are held. Twelve states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws allowing unauthorized immigrants to get a Driver's License or Card.<sup>ii</sup>

A report surveying various studies about the issuances of driver's licenses without regard to immigration done by the National Immigration Law Center found that such state laws:

- Decrease hit and run and fatal accidents
- Increase the number of drivers who obtained insurance
- Decrease overall insurance rates
- Strengthens the overall economy because more cars are purchased by immigrants
- Generates income which exceeds the cost of issuing the licenses
- Increases the number of organ donors.<sup>iii</sup>

In Virginia, some legally present immigrants are allowed to obtain limited duration driver's licenses, but others are excluded. In addition, undocumented immigrants in Virginia are not allowed to apply for a Driver's Privilege Card. In 2016, an in-depth stakeholder study convened by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) recommended legislative remedies, which VICPP supports. The study recommended allowing 12 categories of non-citizens with legal statuses to become eligible for a Virginia driver's license and creating new temporary driving permit cards for people who are undocumented. Those who wish to apply for one of the new permit cards would have to meet certain eligibility criteria that include paying taxes in the commonwealth, paying a fee, and reapplying each year.<sup>iv</sup>

### VICPP's Position

VICPP supports legislation to create Driver's Privilege Cards for immigrants. During the 2019 General Assembly Delegate Boysko will introduce a bill into the House of Delegates and Senator Surovell will introduce one into the Senate. These bills will likely be assigned to the Transportation Committees.

### Take Action

Ask your Delegate and Senator to support legislation for Driver's Privilege Cards for Virginia's immigrants.

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<sup>i</sup> Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, "*Undocumented Immigrants' State and Local Tax Contributions*," March 2, 2017.

<sup>ii</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures, "*States Offering Driver's Licenses to Immigrants*," July 8, 2015.

<sup>iii</sup> National Immigration Law Center, "*Empirical Studies Support Issuance of Driver's Licenses without Regard to Immigration Status*," August 2017.

<sup>iv</sup> Department of Motor Vehicles, "*Report to the Chairman of the Transportation Committee of the Virginia House of Delegates Pursuant to HB 695, HB 987, HB 1316 and SB 390*," November 2016.