

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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February 13, 2019
Start: 11:00 a.m.
Recess: 11:44 a.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: CARLOS MENCHACA
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Daniel Dromm
Mathieu Eugene
Mark Gjonaj
Robert F. Holden
I. Daneek Miller
Kalman Yeger

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Edie Hemendez, Lead Immigration Organizer, Make the Road New York

Theodore Moore, Director of Local Policy and Legislation, New York Immigration Coalition

Cheryl Andrada, Immigration Lawyer, Legal Aid Society

Jessica Ortiz, 32BJ Member

Jorge Ortiz, 32BJ Member

Stephanie Gomez, Hispanic Federation

2 [sound check] [pause] [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Buenos dias.

4 [background comments] [Speaking Spanish] My name is
5 Carlos Menchaca. I'm the President and/or the Chair
6 of the City Council's Committee on Immigration.

7 Welcome. Today the Committee on Immigrations will

8 hear and vote on Resolution 100-A. This is a

9 resolution sponsored by my colleague Council Member

10 Ydanis Rodriguez, who's been a champion on this

11 issues. I want to recognize the members of the

12 Council's Committee on Immigration who are here

13 today, Mark Gjonaj, Council Member from the Bronx.

14 We have Kalman Yeger from Brooklyn; Council Member

15 Holden from Queens; Council Member Mathieu Eugene

16 from Brooklyn; and Council Member Danny Dromm from

17 Queens as well. We also are here joined by the

18 sponsor Ydanis Rodriguez. Resolution 100-A calls on

19 the New York State Legislature to pass and the

20 Governor to sign the Driver's License and Privacy

21 Act, S1747. This is sponsored by State Senator Lisa

22 Puglia and the companion bill A3675 sponsored by

23 Assembly Member Marcos Crespo. The Act currently

24 considered at the State Legislature would remove the

25 DMV's requirement of a Social Security number for

2 driver's licenses, permit and state ID applications.

3 This would remove a significant barrier faced by our

4 undocumented community here in New York State, many

5 of whom need to drive to work or to bring their

6 children to school and enjoy a high quality of life

7 in our state, and with this legislation New York

8 would join 12 other states, Washington D.C. and

9 Puerto Rico that also extend the driver's license

10 access to their undocumented residents, and we are

11 long overdue for this change. The privacy section of

12 the Driver's License and Privacy Act has been

13 thoughtfully crafted to ensure that at no point are

14 undocumented immigrants who take advantage of

15 driver's license access putting their personal

16 identify information at risk. The act additionally

17 prohibits three things. One, the Act prohibits the

18 discrimination of cardholders and applicants. It

19 prohibits the use of the license or permit as

20 evidence of citizenship or immigration status, and it

21 provides the DMV employees from—I'm sorry. And it

22 prohibits the DMV employees from inquiring into

23 applicants' citizenship or immigration status. Many

24 of those we enjoy here at the city from the work that

25 we've been doing here out of this committee and with

2 the City Council. This legislation would be a huge
3 victor for all New Yorkers, and it has been shown
4 that our streets are safer with licensed and ensured
5 drivers on the road, and this bill is a fiscal win,
6 too. At the same time when—at—at a time when budgets
7 and the state revenue are under threat, the Fiscal
8 Policy Institute estimates that this act along could
9 generate \$57 million in registration and licensing
10 fees. In addition, having more licensed drivers on
11 the road could lower automobile insurance premiums
12 across the board in New York State. Today, we'll
13 hear from advocates who will share more about the
14 long journey that they have had in pushing for this.
15 This is a long time coming for them, and they've been
16 asking us as a stated to remove this barrier. What
17 these testimonies will make clear is that the
18 legislation represents the best of democracy, a
19 participatory democratic value where policies can be
20 brought forth by the people, for the people with our
21 help as their representative voice, and this is the
22 value that has brought us here today. We need this
23 important action from the State and we need it now.
24 I urge my colleagues to show their support for this
25 legislation by voting yes on this resolution today in

2 this committee and on the floor later today. Now,
3 we're going to be calling up- Are we going to do--?
4 [pause] Yes. Okay, so we have six folks who want to
5 testify. Is there anybody else that wants to
6 testify--testify that is not--? Okay, great. I'm
7 going to hand it over to the Reso's sponsor Council
8 Member Ydanis Rodriguez.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you,
10 Carlos. I think that everyone know that the
11 grandfather of the person that you have as a
12 president today in this country based on everyone
13 that have been following his immigrant status find
14 out that he was not completely legal. So, the
15 president's grandfather was undocumented at some
16 point, too. So, here we are decades after
17 addressing how we can be helpful to immigrants
18 documented or undocumented. [Speaking Spanish] Good
19 morning. I'm Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez. Thank
20 you Chair Menchaca and members of the Committee on
21 Immigration for holding a hearing. My resolution
22 that encourage the New York State Legislature to pass
23 a bill to restore the ability to allow all New
24 Yorkers regardless of immigration status to apply for
25 a driver's license. I want to thank all the advocate

2 organizations, but especially New York Immigration
3 Coalition, Make the Road New York, the Arab-American
4 Association of New York, Asian-American Federation,
5 African Communities Together and Sixup Biconic for
6 your work (sic) spreading this legislation a the
7 state level and for your support of this resolution
8 before the committee today, and later on at the
9 Stated Meeting. The driver's license for all
10 legislation as a state will make our roads safer,
11 hold all drivers accountable, and potentially enable
12 hundreds of thousands of city residents the ability
13 to apply for their driver's license. According to
14 the Committee Report, today 12 states—12 states,
15 Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia allow
16 undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's license
17 including New Mexico, Utah, Oregon, Nevada, Illinois,
18 Washington, Maryland, Vermont, Colorado, Connecticut,
19 Hawaii, and California. New York State should not be
20 behind. [Speaking Spanish] Other states have set
21 legal precedents for the enactment of driver's
22 license for all into the home of the largest
23 immigrants population in the United States has the
24 opportunity to create equity and economy revenue
25 estranged (sic) for the states. According to the

2 Fiscal Policy Institute allowing undocumented
3 immigrants the opportunity to obtain driver's license
4 could generate up to \$57 million United States
5 revenue through license and registration fees and may
6 lead to lower auto insurance premiums for all New
7 Yorkers. This steady revenue stream could also go
8 toward fixing our subway system. [Speaking Spanish]
9 I am ask—I end by saying that I ask my colleagues to
10 support this resolution today to guarantee driver's
11 license for all as it is consistent with the city and
12 New York State commitment of being a state that
13 welcomes and protect all immigrants. [Speaking
14 Spanish] Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Council
16 Member Ydanis Rodriguez for your words, and for your
17 commitment to the community and to this statewide
18 need. Now, I want to call on—the clerk for a
19 vote.

20 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk
21 roll call vote Committee on Immigration, Resolution
22 100-A. Chair Menchaca.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Aye.

24 CLERK: Eugene.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: May I explain my
3 vote.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: I think that New
6 York City as we all know is home to so many people
7 coming from everywhere, from everywhere from the
8 world, and New York City is a great city. We can say
9 the greatest city in the world because of the
10 contribution. I say that all the time of so many
11 immigrants who came to this country for the same
12 reason that those who came before them to have a
13 better life for themselves, a better life for their
14 families, and also to contribute to the fabric of
15 this city. The immigrant people over here,
16 recommended or not they have the same dream that
17 believe in the American tradition ideal, the dream of
18 America. By giving them the opportunity to have a
19 driver's license this is a win-win situation. That
20 doesn't give them the immigration status. They are
21 already here. They're here already. It is safer for
22 all of us for them to have a driver's license, and as
23 the Chairman and also the sponsor of this resolution
24 said, that will generate revenue in come for New York
25 City. Income and revenues that can be used to make

2 New York City safer, to make New York City better,
3 but all of us who would benefit from that, and having
4 a driver's license also is a necessity. To be able
5 to drive is a necessity for many reasons. I think
6 this is a good resolution. This is a good resolution
7 that will benefit not only the driver's but also New
8 York City and all of us New Yorkers. With that, I
9 vote aye--

10 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing]

11 Thank you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: --and I want to
13 congratulate my colleague Ydanis Rodriguez also for
14 this legislation, and thank you also Mr. Chair for
15 your--your leadership addition on this very important
16 issue--immigration issue. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you.

18 CLERK: Dromm.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Permission to
20 explain my vote.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: I also want to say
23 that I'm very proud to be able to support this
24 legislation. I want to thank Council Member Ydanis
25 Rodriguez for introducing it, and thank you for

2 taking the leadership with it, and I'm very proud to
3 vote yes.

4 CLERK: Gjonaj.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Chair, permission
6 to explain my vote.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Yes.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you. We
9 are a nation of immigrants. We are a nation built on
10 immigrants, and I truly believe in my heart that
11 today's immigrants are no different than yesterday's
12 immigrants, and on the record, its immigrants who
13 have made this country great. That source in pride
14 and strength that these immigrants bring to this
15 great country. Some Americans can trace their family
16 roots back generations, and some like myself are the
17 sons of immigrants. My mother and father came to
18 this great country seeking a better life for
19 themselves, and the family that they were going to
20 start. To make sure that the children had every
21 opportunity to live up to their God given potential.
22 I'm grateful for their courage and sacrifice. With
23 that said, there is no doubt that immigration is a
24 sensitive issue that has and will continue to
25 represent a challenge for policymakers. How do you

2 respect the need to seek a better life while also
3 respecting the fact that we are a nation of laws?
4 It's not easy to balance that act, and no doubt would
5 the at-issue that we will debate as a city and as a
6 nation and as a people for some time to come, but the
7 issue before this committee today is far more limited
8 and specific is an issue of public safety I believe
9 that by ensuring that all drivers on our roadways
10 have proven and demonstrated that they understand the
11 traffic and safety rules that govern our roadways is
12 in everyone's best interest. And by increasing their
13 mobility and thus access to work, I believe that this
14 measure will go a long way to more fully integrate a
15 vulnerable population of people that are already here
16 living in our community, working in our community,
17 our neighbors and the people that we interact with on
18 a daily basis, and increase the chance that they'll
19 some day be able to change their legal status. With
20 that said, I'm proud to cast my vote in favor of
21 Resolution 100.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Yes.

24 CLERK: Holden.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Permission to
3 explain my vote.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I have so many
6 questions on this that cannot be answered today. I'm
7 really upset that we—we don't debate these Resos or
8 bills, and by the way, I—I—somebody does the
9 research, and correct me if I'm wrong, though, that
10 if we issue a—a license a New York State license to
11 an undocumented, they will carry a phrase not to be
12 used for a federal identification. Now, I believe
13 that's to be true. So, that will identify the person
14 as being undocumented essentially to the police. Now
15 I don't know—be careful what you asked for. So, and
16 there's many other states had problems. In fact, New
17 Mexico has a huge problem where there's out of state.
18 They—they had so many applications and did a 5-year
19 federal investigation, and they got a lot of
20 applications from Georgia after the state
21 investigation. Oregon is in the process of a
22 referendum to repeal their undocumented licenses
23 because of a lot of fraud, and the referendum passed
24 2 to 1, but it's being held up in the courts. The
25 courts have upheld the vote to eliminate undocumented

2 licenses in Oregon because again of the fraud that's
3 going on. So, we need to—and that's why debate here.
4 What—how do you prove that you're a resident of New
5 York State? What are—are we thinking about that?
6 So, some states require two years of state income tax
7 to qualify. If that was in here I might consider
8 voting for it. If we—otherwise, I—I knew somebody
9 and this I—I'd like to really vet years ago
10 Washington State was the only state that issued
11 undocumented licenses. I had somebody—a resident of
12 New York State. He was undocumented and I said how
13 did you—how do you have a driver's license? He says
14 well I bought it. I said how did you buy that?
15 \$5,000 he paid. He never set foot in Washington
16 State. He paid some—some people to actually take the
17 driver's test in Washington State and he got a
18 driver's license—license there. So, we need to think
19 about this, and this has been on—this has been out
20 there for a while this reso, and we really haven't
21 discussed it in this committee or anywhere else. So,
22 I think we're—if we're going to recommend something
23 that—we might get a lot of people applying that don't
24 live here, and don't take a driver's test. They just
25 pay somebody, and again, what proof will [cell phone

2 ringing] we have. When I spoke to Homeland Security
3 a few years ago, they said we don't know the identity
4 of--of the undocumented many of them. We don't have
5 really documentation. So it's a, you know, I think
6 it's premature. I think we should, you know, look at
7 this. I--and I'm a little upset that again, we're not
8 getting the time to really vet this. I did minimal
9 research on it, but I'm finding problems. So, I
10 would urge the City Council to--to look at this. So,
11 I'm going to vote no because of that. I know you
12 wanted to move it, but we need more debate in the
13 City Council. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you.

15 CLERK: Yeger.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Mr. Chairman, may
17 I be excused to explain my vote?

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Thank you. As
20 I've said, here in this room and this committee in
21 the last 13 months since I took office and I've said
22 it on the floor of the Chambers, I, too, am a son of
23 immigrants. My father came to this country on a boat
24 with his older brother. He passed away this weekend,
25 and his parents and their parents, and when you look

2 at the faces on this committee and the names, Carlos
3 Menchaca, Danny Dromm, Mathieu Eugene, Ydanis
4 Rodriguez, Bob Holden, myself Mark Gjonaj, we're all
5 immigrants who all came to this country either
6 ourselves or our parents or our grandparents or our
7 great grandparents, but not that much far back to a
8 nation that welcomed us with open arms, and a great
9 country that should do more for immigrants
10 undoubtedly, which is why I'm sad today that I don't
11 have a chance to vote on this resolution on the
12 merits of the resolution. I can't and the reason is
13 because we haven't had a hearing here in this
14 Council. There's been no deliberation in this
15 deliberative body on this resolution. The resolution
16 was introduced on January 31st of last year in the
17 second Stated Meeting of the session of the Council
18 and it languished, sat ignored. Nobody talked about
19 it. It was never a conversation. It has one
20 sponsor, my good friend Ydanis Rodriguez who was also
21 the sponsor of the prior resolution on the same topic
22 that sat and languished for four years the previous
23 session of the Council with six sponsors, two of whom
24 no longer serve here. Sat, languished, never talked
25 about. And then on Friday afternoon we get a notice

2 guess what everybody show up on Wednesday because
3 we're voting this emergency bill, this emergency
4 resolution out of this Council, out of this committee
5 onto the floor of the Chamber so that we can vote on
6 it in in two hours time from now because God forbid
7 if we don't move this today the world will end, the
8 city will shut down. Things—bad things will happen.
9 What's the rush? Is there a rush? I don't know that
10 there's a particular reason that we have to today to
11 do this. It's not to say this is not a good idea.
12 It's also to be clear, it's not a law that we're
13 voting on. It's a resolution. The State Legislature
14 will do what they do. What we do today whether we
15 pass this or not it will pass. As you know, I've
16 said this before. I'll say it again: Nothing comes
17 to this committee or to any committee for a vote
18 unless it's going to pass. We are here to put our
19 rubber stamps on and move the things along, and
20 that's what we'll do, but whatever we do today will
21 not advance or hinder the passage of the two bills in
22 the State Legislature. They will move forward
23 accordingly. I, too, I'm a nerd and I'm proud of
24 that. It's my—my—my badge of honor or—or my cross to
25 bear, if you will. I do read everything, and I did

2 read the A&S bills as soon as I found out. I was out
3 of the country for the last—for two days earlier this
4 week but I returned and I read them last night.
5 Again, not about the merits. The State Legislature
6 will act. The question that I have today is whether
7 or not we as a body should violate our own rules and
8 traditions? Should we move forward with a vote today
9 for an item that until Friday afternoon was not on
10 our calendar, was not heard by this Council by this
11 committee. Everybody knows, anybody who's watching
12 us knows we have one hearing. We take a break. We
13 deliberate. We come back several weeks, months,
14 whatever it is later. We have a second hearing and a
15 vote. We deliberate as a body. We deliberate as a
16 Council. We deliberate as members of a party. We've
17 been doing this for a long time. I didn't invent
18 this. I just got here, but today we're not going to
19 do that, and that's why I said it pains me because I
20 would like to be able to consider this resolution on
21 its merits. That was taken away from me, and so,
22 today I will not be able to vote in favor of it. The—as
23 my colleague Council Member Holden said, I do prefer
24 debate. You know, I've served 18 years on a
25 community board. I had more debating going on in one

2 month in a community board than I've had in a year in
3 this Council. We should debate things, and may the
4 better ideas and the better concepts and the better
5 arguments win the day, and do the right think for the
6 people of New York. It's not about the

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] How
8 do you vote?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: --the merits of
10 the bill.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [interposing] In
12 the interest--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: [interposing] I
14 know we have to move. Again, you know, usually we
15 have two hearings for a resolution. Today, we have
16 the--the proverbial stick to our heads, if you will,
17 and move forward, move forward, move forward because
18 have a Stated meeting. We must vote this because if
19 we don't put that vote out they can't write their
20 agenda. They can't put it on the desk. Don't worry,
21 folks, the agenda is already printed. It's already
22 there. They know how we're doing this. They know
23 what's going on. So, today I will not vote in favor.
24 I will not vote against it. I will abstain because I
25 do not support the--the process by which we have

2 violated our own rules, our own traditions of this
3 body and with that I abstain. Thank you Mr.
4 Chairman.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you and I—I
6 want to extend my condolences to you and your family,
7 and yes.

8 CLERK: By a vote of 4 in the
9 affirmative, 1 in the negative and 1 abstention,
10 Resolution 100-A has been adopted by the committee.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you and in—
12 in just—in quick response to some of the comments
13 that were made, I want to say while there was more
14 hunger for me debate that—that I hope that you felt
15 like your voices were heard by me as the Chair giving
16 you the space to talk about it in your—in your vote,
17 and that we're going to keep moving forward. We do
18 want to hear from the voices of the community as
19 well. Your testimony—

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: [interposing] Mr.
21 Chairman, I just—I want to acknowledge publicly for
22 the record and—and for ourselves as members of the
23 committee and—and the body that the Chair did have
24 conversations with myself, I know with other members
25 and the Chair has always been open with an open ear

2 and an open door. We're neighbors not just in our
3 districts but also across the street in our building,
4 and I'm very grateful for you having the open ear to
5 us.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you for
7 that, and I want to keep moving in that—in that
8 direction for the kind of participatory process that
9 we want to—we want to get to. And so that's always
10 going to be a challenge, but I'm—I'm trying to meet
11 that challenge. And so, we want to call two panels
12 from the community to speak their minds, and that
13 first panel will Make the Road, Maritza Mendez; Theo
14 Moore from New York Immigration Coalition and the
15 Legal Aid Society's Cheryl Andela (sp?) if you can
16 come up please, and I know there other votes
17 happening right now. So, if you need to—if-if
18 members need to leave, you can, but I want to make
19 sure that—that I as Chair for sure hear from the
20 Community. This testimony is going to be taken into
21 account as we move forward into the Stated Meeting,
22 but we will be voting on this resolution as well.

23 [background comments]

24 EDIE HEMENDEZ: Yeah, yeah, right.
25 Great. So, I'm just going to ahead and start. So,

2 good morning and thank you, Councilman Menchaca and
3 the Committee members for holding hearing today, and
4 to Council Member Rodriguez for sponsoring this
5 resolution. My name is Edie Hemendez, and I'm the
6 Lead Immigration Organizer at Make the Road New York.
7 Make the Road New York is a non-profit organization
8 community-based with over 23,000 members dedicated to
9 building power of immigrants in working class
10 communities to achieve dignity and justice through
11 organizing policy innovation, transportation of
12 education and survival services. As most of you
13 know, we operate out of five community centers in
14 Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, Long Island and now
15 in Westchester County. I'm here today to talk in
16 support of the driver's license and the need for it
17 to be accessible to all residents of the state
18 regardless of their immigration status. For the last
19 two years Make the Road had has formed part of the
20 steering committee of the statewide coalition known
21 as Green Light, an coalition that has received the
22 support of 130 organizations across the state, have
23 worked tirelessly get resolution and support of over
24 20 local bodies of government and a handful from
25 local-local law enforcement. In 2007, Governor

2 Spitzer attempted to expand the access of driver's
3 licenses to all residents of the state regardless of
4 their immigration status under an executive order.
5 But each time he encountered opposition. Fast
6 forward a couple of years. Last November communities
7 of color worked tirelessly to change the political
8 makeup of the Legislature. Their efforts resulted in
9 many seats being flipped on the Senate giving the
10 Democrats the control they needed to pass progressive
11 legislation such as the one being discussed here
12 today. In areas of New York City and State where
13 public transportation is not reliable, driving is
14 essential to get around. On a daily basis
15 undocumented residents struggle to get to work, place
16 of worship, take their children to school or attend
17 to any emergencies that might just come up all
18 because they do not have access to a driver's
19 license. This is an issue of necessity and not
20 privilege. Undocumented New York State residents pay
21 over \$1 billion in state and city taxes annually.
22 Issuing license—a driver's license to all residents
23 will allow them to take opportunities in other
24 boroughs and neighborhoods, expanding their
25 contribution to the overall economy of the state.

2 Once licensed, New York State undocumented residents
3 will overcome the transportation barriers that
4 prevent them from obtaining improved job options and
5 increase income, resulting in the economic security
6 immigrant families need to drive. As a sane and
7 active member of Make the Road and Staten Island
8 resident is a perfect example of this. He rents a
9 piece of land where he grows crops to sell at
10 Farmer's Market often held near Saint George Terminal
11 and to donate—to donate in local food pantries. Every
12 summer he ends up paying a licensed driver to
13 transport his products to the Farmer's Market and to
14 food pantries because he is not able to deliver them
15 himself. While it's totally—while he's totally
16 capable of driving, he prefers to make this
17 unnecessary investment than to put at risk his safety
18 and that of his loved ones. Instead of saving a
19 couple of extra dollars, he ends up working two jobs
20 to amend for the cost of transportation.

21 Furthermore, the Fiscal Policy Institute as you made
22 in the legislation will not only impact the lives of
23 approximately 265,000 undocumented New York State
24 residents, but that it will also provide a
25 substantial amount of revenue to the state as a

2 whole. It's estimated that—it is estimate that the
3 state will receive and recruiting annual revenue of
4 \$57 million and \$26 million in a one-time revenue
5 through taxes and fees. In addition, licensing
6 undocumented New York State residents will have lower
7 insurance premiums to all drivers [bell] by a
8 moderate average of \$17.00 per year while
9 collectively saving motorists millions of dollars
10 annually. I conclude by saying the most undocumented
11 immigrants would like to comply with federal
12 immigration law, but there is no legal option
13 available to them until congressional reform is
14 implemented. The State of Washington led the way in
15 1993 by expanding the access of driver's license to
16 all residents regardless of immigration status.
17 Eleven others later joined. This year elected
18 officials from Wisconsin and Massachusetts have come
19 out in support of this expansion as well. By passing
20 Resolution 100-A, our city will begin to recognize
21 the life of undocumented residents like Augustine.
22 This is the year for New York State to pass driver's
23 license for all. [Speaking Spanish]

24 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [Speaking Spanish]

25 And I just want to highlight something you said.

2 This is an issue of necessity not privilege, and I
3 think that really kind of drives the—the point home.
4 Yeah.

5 THEODORE MOORE: Good morning.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [off mic] Good
7 morning.

8 THEODORE MOORE: My name is Theodore
9 Moore. I'm the Director of Local Policy and
10 Legislation at the New York Immigration Coalition an
11 umbrella policy and advocacy organization that works
12 statewide with 200 immigrants serving immigrant
13 member organizations. I want to thank you to the
14 City Council, the Immigration Committee for convening
15 this important hearing, and Council Member Rodriguez
16 for introducing the resolution, to the—to the
17 committee staff obviously for all of your hard work
18 and obviously just for supporting the issue of
19 expanding driver's licenses to undocumented
20 immigrants and the legislation that was introduced in
21 the Senate by Senator Sepulveda and in the Assembly
22 by Assembly Member Marcos Crespo. I'm must going to
23 paraphrase because quite frankly we did way too good
24 a job and you all already know so much about the
25 issue. Even during your opening statements, you

2 mentioned a lot of the things that I would obviously
3 mention. So, let me just cut to the chase. Besides
4 obviously all of the revenue positive aspects of the
5 legislation, there are countless reasons why we
6 should do this. Obviously, licensing all immigrant
7 drivers ensures that, you know, they'll be better
8 informed of the traffic laws, you know, just like
9 going through the process of obtaining that license.
10 More licensed drivers will lead to more car sales and
11 greater mobility and our role in suburban immigrant
12 areas and for that workforce. And finally, you know,
13 this is just a state that continues to price ourself
14 in welcoming immigrants, and we must do all that we
15 can do against the bulwark of federal policies that
16 prosecute immigrants and asylum seekers and unjustly
17 separate families. Lastly, you know, I just want to
18 disband the myth that I hear a lot about by allowing
19 in undocumented individuals to obtain driver's
20 licenses will not positively affect individuals in
21 New York City that this is mostly, you know, a
22 Western New York and Upstate New York. This is
23 mostly a rural issue, and that because of their lack
24 of public transportation [bell] that this mostly
25 affects them and that because--

2 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: I'm going to give
3 you two more minutes.

4 THEODORE MOORE: Okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: I want to hear a
6 story.

7 THEODORE MOORE: And because we have
8 access to public transportation here in New York City
9 that we don't need driver's licenses. So, and
10 obviously when people say that they don't think—they
11 think about New York, but they don't think about the
12 New York that doesn't have access and aren't—that are
13 in those transportation deserts. You know, I'm
14 thinking about Saint Albans, South Jamaica, Glenoaks
15 and Queens. I'm thinking about Stapleton and North
16 Short of Staten Island. I'm thinking about East
17 Chester and Co-op City in the Bronx. In Brooklyn I'm
18 thinking about Canarsie, Flatlands, East Flatbush.
19 These are all immigrant communities that have lacked,
20 you know, lack of access to public transportation.
21 And I know about this firsthand because I grew up in
22 East Flatbush. My father works in Woodside, Queens.
23 If he couldn't drive to work, there would be no way
24 for him to have this job. Without being able to
25 drive to work, he would have to take the B8 to

2 Newkirk. Then take the 2 Train all the way to Times
3 Square, then transfer to the 7 Train. Take the 7
4 Train all the way to 61st Street at Woodside and then
5 walk 30 minutes to get to his job. That is the route
6 from East Flatbush to Woodside, Queens. Feel free to
7 check it out. I know because I took that trip a
8 couple times to go visit my father, and I was like
9 please give me a ride home. My father is in his 60s.
10 That is not a route that he could take on a normal
11 basis. It ends up being nearly two hours from door
12 to door, and this is something that a lot of people
13 have to deal with. In our neighborhood quite
14 frankly, you know, we're dealing with the fact that
15 in East Flatbush we're a food desert, too. Our local
16 supermarket closed down. That's the supermarket that
17 my mother walked to to get our groceries. So, now
18 she likes to drive to-to Fairway in Georgetown. This
19 is something that would take about 40 to 45 minutes
20 on the bus. So, quite frankly, you know, she's, you
21 know, they're carrying one week, two weeks worth of
22 groceries. It's just not conceivable for them to do
23 that with my aging parents. So, when people say that
24 this wouldn't really affect individuals in New York
25 City they really don't understand about, you know,

2 the transportation deserts [bell] that exist and then
3 the food deserts that exist. Luckily my parents are
4 able to drive, but a lot of people in the community
5 of East Flatbush in my neighborhood they don't have
6 the ability to drive, and this would really affect
7 them.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: [off mic] for a---
9 and for reminding us of the importance of the New
10 York City experience, and this is really a statewide
11 and--and city of New York need.

12 CHERYL ANDRADA: [off mic] Thank you.
13 Chairman for having us here today.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Make sure that
15 your mic is on. There's a red light. [background
16 comments]

17 CHERYL ANDRADA: Do I cover it?

18 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: There you go--

19 CHERYL ANDRADA: Okay.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: -- and then bring
21 it closer to you.

22 CHERYL ANDRADA: Thank you, Chairman for
23 hearing us today. My name is Cheryl Andrada. I'm an
24 immigration lawyer at the Legal Aid Society, and I
25 support this bill because it helps my clients. So,

2 my clients by driving without a license or by driving
3 without insurance make themselves at-put themselves
4 at risk of removal if they're arrested. They put
5 themselves at risk of removal and of detention by
6 immigration and customs enforcement even if they
7 don't have any prior offenses. So, this bill would
8 reduce that risk for my clients. We-the Legal Aid
9 Society also supports this bill because this bill
10 would allow my clients to have a readily acceptable
11 government ID. This would also allow my clients to
12 have greater economic opportunity. It would give
13 them access to a broad array of jobs. It would allow
14 them to get to work more efficiently, and this also-
15 this bill would also allow my clients to be properly
16 insured. So, in the case of an accident that
17 insurance would benefit not just them, but everybody
18 else on the road. As stated earlier, this bill would
19 reduce the cost of insurance for all drivers in New
20 York State by putting more people in the insured
21 pool. Also, this bill would require everybody to take
22 a driving test before they-well that would already
23 be-be required, but it would put more people that
24 have already been vetted by taking a class. It would
25 increase safety on the road. So, the Legal Aid

2 Society supports this bill because it supports our
3 clients. It reduces the risk of immigration
4 consequences and it increases economic opportunity
5 and safety.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you for—for
7 your testimony, for representing you clients. Your
8 clients many of them New York City clients. You
9 probably have some Upstate clients as well, but they
10 all present the same need and not only are we—are we
11 helping them with NYFUP funding for lawyers to
12 protect them, this is a further protection not just
13 for the rights, but for their livelihood and for
14 their quality of life. This is what New York State
15 is all about, and we're—we're happy to hear that here
16 at the committee, and hopefully at the Stated give
17 that enthusiastic thumbs up for this legislation.
18 Thank you. Thank you to this panel.

19 CHERYL ANDRADA: Thank you, Chairman.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you. Okay.
21 So, we are onto our final panel. We have Jessica
22 Ortiz, Stephanie Gomez from the Hispanic Federation
23 and then Jorge Ortiz as well, 32BJ. Is there anyone
24 that wants to testify? Okay. [pause] [Speaking
25 Spanish]

2 JESSICA ORTIZ: Jessica Ortiz.

3 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Okay, Jessica,
4 yeah, bring it close-closer. Just a little. There
5 you are.

6 JESSICA ORTIZ: Good morning. My name is
7 Jessica Ortiz and I am a 32BJ member from the Bronx.
8 I want to thank the Council leadership and the
9 committee for holding this hearing. Over 725,000
10 undocumented immigrant New Yorkers over the age of 16
11 are currently unable to access the essential right to
12 a driver's license. This does not include an
13 additional 70,000 New York residents with DACA and
14 TPS whose status is at risk. The safety of all New
15 Yorkers and our roads cannot wait for federal
16 government. We must do all that is with in our power
17 to protect our state and its residents. If New York
18 State allows more drivers to be licensed and insured,
19 we can make our roads safer for everyone.
20 Unauthorized immigrant drivers also face unique
21 threats to their safety and ability to remain in this
22 country when they take the risk of driving without a
23 license. One traffic violation can mean separation
24 from their children should they get stopped,
25 arrested, detained or deported. The current system

2 is not fair. Driver's licenses for all would be good
3 for the safety of our roads and the integration and
4 participation or the immigration communities. It
5 would also provide the state with increased revenue
6 through hundreds of thousand of new authorized
7 drivers. It would help our local economy in New York
8 City and throughout the state. On behalf of my
9 fellow members in our union we urge the Council to
10 support this resolution and call on the state to act
11 on driver's licenses for all.

12 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you for your
13 testimony, and for the representation of your members
14 as well. Thank you. [pause]

15 JORGE ORTIZ: Good morning. My name is
16 Jorge Ortiz. I am a 32BJ member from Queens. I want
17 to thank the Council for working on this important
18 issue. The State Legislative—first they introduced
19 the Driver's License Access and Privacy Act, which
20 would create a standard license accessible to all New
21 York State residents regardless of immigration
22 status. 32BJ is with you agrees with the concept to
23 pass the solutions and call on the state to enact
24 this legislation. They are the strong policies, and
25 recent enforcements in New York State driver's

2 license that are available for all qualified driving.
3 It will make our roads safer stretching our state
4 economy, promote community trust and we give
5 immigrants access to the identification needed to
6 participate in everything in everyday life. To
7 Upstate Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico have all
8 passed similar legislations, and it's time that New
9 York join the ranks. 32BJ has seen the positive
10 impact that driver's license for all can have on all
11 the life for our members, and the immigration
12 community as a whole in many of our districts.
13 Immigrants with access to driver's license are more
14 likely to have good jobs and support strong
15 communities. On behalf of 32BJ members that you and
16 immigration across New York, we all know the concept
17 of that is a solution as the state passes driver's
18 license for all.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Gracias.

20 JORGE ORTIZ: Thank you.

21 STEPHANIE GOMEZ: Good morning. Thank
22 you for the opportunity to speak on the urgency of
23 this matter. I'd like to, you know, we've touched on
24 a lot of the topics, the economic benefits, the
25 social impact, the safer roads. So, I'd like to take

2 this moment to highlight my story since it personally
3 affects me or it—it did. At the time when driver's
4 licenses for all was taking away back in 2002, my
5 mother was undocumented, and at the time she had a
6 valid driver's license, but then once it expired she
7 was no able to renew because she could not show that
8 she had a Social Security number. I was 12 at the
9 time, but when I soon approached the age of 16, it
10 was made very clear by my mother that she would have
11 to rely heavily on me. So that meant rushing to
12 obtain my driver's license as soon as I was eligible
13 to, driving myself to and from school, driving her
14 around on the weekends to run errands. So, that took
15 a toll not only on her, but on myself. As a child
16 that was very stressful, and it placed a lot of
17 pressure on—on myself and my family. If I couldn't
18 be there for her, then she had to risk herself, her
19 life of others to drive without a valid driver's
20 license. I can imagine that there are many, many
21 stories like mine and more, and—and so the—and—and I
22 wouldn't wish that on anyone. The importance of a
23 driver's license for all is crucial because it
24 affects our daily lives. No child should have to go
25 through that, and adults having to get to and from

2 work going to the grocery store to put food on the
3 table, that all places such a-a stress on our daily
4 lives. And so, I applaud the City Council for voting
5 on the resolution and I hope that this bill in the
6 Legislature can move forward. Thank you. [bell]

7 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you for
8 your-for your testimony and for the work that you do
9 at the Hispanic Federation. The Green Light-the
10 Green Light Coalition is a coalition that has brought
11 these stories forward, and this conversation is not
12 an old conversation, and I think you kind of heard
13 that from folks, and the debate has been alive and
14 well on our streets, in our-in our homes, in our
15 families, and so now-now we are ready. And so, with
16 the affirmative votes here at the City Council
17 Committee, we are sending that message that
18 Rodriguez's resolution is a resolution that really
19 captured the spirit of our community and the need.
20 Whether you're a union member or you live in Queens,
21 that this is not-that this is not a privilege. This
22 is a necessity for everyday life, and I think that's-
23 that's what-what I'm taking away from here, and so I
24 want to ask is there anyone else that wants to
25 testify on this? Okay, we'll, I know we have a press

2 conference to go to. So, we're going to—we're going
3 to end the hearing now with—with great pride that
4 this is passed the committee and is on its way to the
5 States in a few hours. [Speaking Spanish]

6 STEPHANIE GOMEZ: Thank you. [applause]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date March 18, 2019