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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF 21-H 5305, AN ACT RELATING TO OPERATORS' AND CHAUFFEURS' LICENSES March 17, 2021

The ACLU of RI strongly supports this bill, which would ensure that immigrant drivers, regardless of their status, are trained, tested, licensed and insured. Contrary to the views of opponents of this legislation, doing this will actually promote public safety.

As long as there is a substantial population of undocumented immigrants in the state, it makes little sense to deprive them of a license solely because of their immigration status. Allowing individuals to get a license promotes safe driving since it will require them passing a driving test and having insurance, and it will further provide a means of identification for law enforcement and for other purposes.

This bill is carefully crafted to ensure that only people who can prove their identity and their residence in Rhode Island will qualify for licenses. Whether a person should get a driver's license should be based solely on whether they are qualified as drivers and are residents of *the state*. No more should be required.

It is time for Rhode Island to join the many other states – including such diverse jurisdictions as Connecticut, Virginia, New Mexico, Nevada and Utah – that authorize licenses for undocumented immigrants. The ACLU urges passage of this legislation.