

**House Transportation Committee
H.B. 279 – Drivers Licenses for All
Testimony of Kyle Rivers, CASA
August 11, 2021**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, and esteemed panel.

My name is Kyle Rivers and I serve as CASA's advocacy specialist in Pennsylvania. CASA is the largest membership-based immigrant rights organization in the mid-Atlantic region, with more than 115,000 members. On behalf of CASA members and communities across the state, thank you for the opportunity to have this hearing because it provides us the chance to discuss first hand how important this bill is for all Pennsylvanians.

Year after year CASA members have consistently fought to achieve the freedom of movement in the state that they call home through the creation of a state-issued driver's license that any Pennsylvanian – regardless of their immigration status – could obtain.

Immigration status should not determine eligibility for a license. A license should be granted based on an individual's driving skills. This is about making sure all Pennsylvania drivers are tested, trained, licensed and insured.

Almost everyone agrees that when folks who are on the road have permission to drive, have proper training in how to operate a vehicle, and have valid insurance, everyone wins. Undocumented Pennsylvanians are just like you and me, with fundamental needs such as going to doctor's appointments, taking their children to school, and going to work. They have the same responsibilities, like paying taxes and providing for their families. By granting these folks access to a standard issue driver's license, this ensures that there's a clear understanding of their responsibility in operating a vehicle. That creates safer roads for all Pennsylvanians.

Prior to 2002, undocumented Pennsylvanians were able to attain a standard issue drivers license through federal tax ID number also known as an ITIN Number. Since then, thousands of people who had obtained their licenses had them taken away. Despite this, the need for freedom of movement has not changed. These same folks are still doing what they need to do but at the risk of being taken to jail or worse: possible deportation and separation from their families.

The public safety aspect also goes beyond the road. In addition to ensuring that drivers and licensees understand the rules and responsibilities on the road, a standard issue driver's license ensures that folks have another resource as valid form of identification, which is often a need while interacting with businesses, organizations, government entities and police departments across the commonwealth. Not everyone is familiar with valid forms of identification provided by government entities from countries around the globe.

Just to give you an example, in York, CASA has been working for many years to establish trust and a meaningful relationship with the police department and the city government. While we've made strides addressing bias, and ultimately helping our community feel more comfortable interacting with the police, whether to report crimes or collaborate, there's still a missing piece to bridge the gap.

We continue pushing these same efforts in Lancaster, here in Dauphin and in Chester and collaborate with other communities to also make it happen all across the state. Because at the end of the day, we want to feel safe and fully participate and contribute to the fabric of our communities.

On the economic front, this bill will offer clear and significant economic benefits to the commonwealth. Our Driving PA Forward Coalition estimates that this bill will generate around \$13 million in the first three years alone. This legislation will also increase the productivity of the commonwealth through allowing more people to work and earn

higher wages in jobs that may not necessarily be in the neighborhood where people live.

To conclude, HB279 offers a clear solution making the commonwealth's roads safer and more equitable. Passing this piece of legislation is a public safety issue and an economic issue. This piece of legislation will grant the right of movement to taxpaying Pennsylvanians, allowing them to further participate in society and serve as active members in their communities.

Making driver's licenses accessible allows people to participate equally in daily life, makes our roads safer by ensuring drivers are qualified, and helps our economy by registering new drivers. In Pennsylvania, no one should struggle getting to work, keeping medical appointments, taking children to school, or more, simply because they cannot access driver's licenses.

By passing this needed legislation with ample protections for all Pennsylvanians, regardless of their immigration status, we are growing our economy while making our roads safer. For all the reasons mentioned CASA in Pennsylvania is proud to support House Bill 279. Pass HB279 and let the people drive.

Thank you.