



Restoring Driving Privileges to Immigrants: *Uniform Driver's Licenses Maximize Benefits to Law Enforcement and Public Safety*

So far this year alone, seven states plus Puerto Rico have enacted legislation giving immigrants the right to drive, regardless of status. While many states have adopted licenses that are differentially marked from regular licenses, both Washington and New Mexico provide uniform licenses to all drivers. These are the best models for immigrant inclusion and public safety policies for the following reasons:

DMV has the resources and ability to authenticate foreign documents for the purpose of issuing uniform driver's licenses to all Californians.

- The DMV already employs specially trained staff to inspect and verify identification documents presented by potential drivers. These officers regularly make visual determinations about the facial authenticity of foreign documents and can consult with forensic experts regarding documents that are unknown or seem suspicious. The skills and training are transferrable to the inspection of foreign documents.
- DMVs in other states (including New Mexico, Illinois and Vermont) receive technical support from foreign government consulates, which offer training and assistance in authenticating passports and consular issued identity documents.

Marked licenses undermine public safety and civil rights.

- Any license that is visibly distinguishable invites discrimination between those with the distinguished license and those with regular driver's licenses by private and public actors (including landlords, banks, etc.), raising the potential for racial profiling, wasted resources, and liability for local law enforcement agencies.
- Express language prohibiting discrimination against people with distinguishable licenses is inadequate to prevent discrimination and is difficult to enforce.

Uniform licenses best advance the goal of establishing valid identification for more Californians.

- Uniform licenses advance public safety by providing all Californians with proof of the holder's identity for purposes essential to law enforcement, such as secure identification of victims, witnesses and suspects, and increased confidence and cooperation from card holders who would otherwise be hesitant to interact with law enforcement.
- The issuance of regular driver's licenses valid as ID for all drivers would enable law enforcement to avoid wasting time and resources by reducing the number of arrests for minor infractions/offenses through issuing citations rather than arresting people with driver's licenses that cannot be used for identification.
- A distinguished license that does not serve as a valid form of ID would fail to address many daily barriers that immigrants face such as: obtaining certain medications; leasing or renting a home; getting a library card; renting a car; or cashing a check.

Providing uniform licenses to all Californians will promote efficiency and protect privacy

- To the extent that a distinguished license is only valid for a limited period of time, such a program creates unnecessary additional reapplication burdens on the state and the applicant.
- A database of immigrants ineligible for regular licenses due to their status creates a risk that this information could be disclosed or reported to Department of Homeland Security, either as a result of a subsequent official policy or as a result of rogue actors within DMV.