



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Time to Give Drivers Licenses to All New Yorkers!

LUIS SEPÚLVEDA December 7, 2018

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For many New Yorkers who cannot access public transportation and need to drive, a routine traffic stop can lead to something much worse than a ticket; it can lead to deportation. That's why restoring equal access to driver's licenses for all New Yorkers is not controversial, it is a necessity.

All over the state, immigrants need to go to work, school, and attend doctor's appointments, but in places like upstate New York, Long Island, and parts of New York City, a lack of public transportation means driving is the only option.

Jorge Cotraro, a father and husband in Long Island, has seen himself forced to drive without a license to get to work because being late to work, or missing his children's doctor's appointments, is not something he can afford. Every time that Jorge is forced to drive, he leaves his home with fear and uncertainty if he will be able to come home to his family because a routine traffic stop can lead him down the path to deportation. That's because interactions with local law enforcement can trigger immigration consequences, as they're often used by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to justify detention and deportation. And it's why Jorge, a member of community organization Make the Road New York, has joined his neighbors to fight for driver's licenses across the state.

New Yorkers should not fear that they will be separated from their family. For the first time in a decade, the New York State legislature will be under complete Democratic control, with leading legislators in all chambers of state government who have stated publicly that they support restoring driver's licenses for all. Legislation we strongly support will achieve this vital goal, and it's time for us to move ahead and pass it in 2019.

The legislation would allow the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to issue a Standard License to all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status. Immigrant New Yorkers, regardless of their immigration status, would then be able to properly license as well as operate a registered, inspected and insured vehicle. This would lead to an economic boost to New York State. According to the Fiscal Policy Institute, an estimated [\\$57 million](#) in combined annual government revenues, plus \$26 million in one-time revenues projected as a result of people getting licenses and purchasing vehicles. It's no wonder that 12 states throughout the country, and Washington D.C and Puerto Rico, already allow for people, regardless of immigration status, to drive. It's also why our neighbors in New Jersey are moving towards passing a similar measure.

Equal access to driver's licenses for all, will not only boost our economy and protect people like Jorge and his family, but it makes sense for the public safety of all New Yorkers. As a ranking member of the Crime Victims, Crime and Correction committee, it is imperative that New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, are able to come forward to report a crime. Undocumented New Yorkers should not fear prosecution for not having proper identification when coming in contact with local law enforcement.

Support from elected officials for this effort is strong across the state. Governor Cuomo has said he supports this plan. In Upstate New York, [Saugerties Police Chief Joseph Sinagra](#) and his police department have spoken in favor of the "Driver's License Access And Privacy Act." [Brooklyn Borough President](#) Eric Adams has expressed the urgency and New York City

Comptroller Scott M. Stringer supports it. Many new State Senators-elect from across the state have expressed their support.

It is time, we take the necessary steps to protect our communities, make our roads safer, and boost our economy. It's time to restore access to driver's licenses to all.

*Luis Sepulveda, is the New York State Senator for the 32nd District and sponsor of the driver's license legislation. Javier Vales is the Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York.*