



**Written Statement for the Record by Marissa Molina
Colorado State Immigration Manager for FWD.us**

Submitted to the Colorado State Senate Finance Committee
February 28, 2019

Chairwoman Court, Vice Chairman Lee, members of the Colorado State Senate Finance Committee, Senators Coram and Moreno: First and foremost, thank you for holding this important hearing on the benefits of providing all Coloradans, regardless of immigration status, with access to driver's licenses as established by SB13-251 through SB19-139.

My name is Marissa Molina. I have the pleasure of serving as the Colorado State Immigration Manager for FWD.us, a bipartisan political advocacy organization started by business and tech leaders committed to meaningful reform to our broken immigration and criminal justice systems, which have locked too many people out from the American Dream.

I grew up in Glenwood Springs and still vividly remember what it was like before all Colorado residents, regardless of immigration status, could access driver's licenses. When I was a senior in high school, my Dad was arrested early one morning on his way to work for driving without a driver's license. At the time, I could not understand why my father, an honest, hardworking man would get punished for driving to work to provide for his family and pave the way for me to be able to go to college. Our lives dramatically changed after that day, my parents no longer felt safe driving in our community. As a result, I was forced to stop participating in after school programming alongside my classmates.

Years later, my parents were able to adjust their status and gain access to driver's licenses. Thanks to SB 251 passing in 2013, other Colorado immigrants who meet strict qualification requirements were also given the opportunity to apply for driver's licenses, ensuring all of Colorado's drivers follow the same rules – including getting properly licensed, registered and insured, so I would like to particularly thank this legislative body for passing that bill.

When the legislation was first enacted, it allowed immigrants to obtain drivers licenses from six DMV locations, making our roads safer. Between 2015-2019, the number of offices dwindled to three with one additional to handle renewals and a cap put in place on the program, which will be hit summer, will further reduce the number of offices to just one. One location cannot accommodate the amount of appointments needed to issue these drivers' licenses – especially with an overwhelming backlog of current applications.

Further, with limited DMV options, once applicants are able to secure an appointment, they have to find a way to get to limited locations no matter where they live in the state. With 60,000 more Coloradans expected to become eligible due to the rescission of DACA and temporary protected status (TPS), it's crucial this legislation pass in order to fix the budgetary oversight, change the cap of licenses for distribution and expand access to ten DMVs for applicants.

This program not only keeps our roads and every driver on them safer, but it affords all Colorado residents who pass the written and practical test the ability to fully contribute. From simple tasks like opening bank accounts to dire needs like filling critical job roles, these licenses allow all Colorado residents the opportunity to better participate in our economy. This is especially important since Colorado's agricultural economy is comprised of 35 percent immigrant workers – many who live in rural parts of our state and don't have access to public transportation.

Expanding access of these licenses could save close to \$60 million in insurance premiums each year and provide the auto insurance industry \$118 million in annual revenue. In addition to keeping our premiums from skyrocketing, the program also helps bolster our state economically and is self-funded, with the higher fees charged for the 251 licenses covering the cost of operating the program.



Colorado's immigrant workers fill 11.7 percent of our state's crucial STEM occupations and immigrant-owned Colorado businesses employ close to 84,000 workers and generate \$1.1 billion in income. Additionally, since our undocumented residents already contribute \$140 million in state and local taxes, providing new routes and efficiency to employment will only grow that number.

Providing all Colorado residents, regardless of immigration status, access to a driver's license is life-changing for individuals, families and communities. The financial, economic and safety benefits alone underscore that failing to fix the current funding for additional DMV locations will hurt all of us.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our thoughts today. Please consider a vote in support of SB19-139 today to truly move Colorado forward.

To learn more, visit fwd.us.

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