



The Latino Community Fund Georgia Believes Expanding Opportunities for Driver Licenses Creates Safer Roads & Better Communities

Georgia could make its roads measurably safer while better serving all Georgians through productive legislation. Drivers whose abilities have been proven through measurable standards would be accountable, would make our roads safer, and would find it easier to work, study, and raise families.

Around 400,000 individuals--many of whom work in factories and farms, pillars of Georgian industry and economy--are prevented from driving with proper licensing.¹ Beyond encountering work-related transportation hurdles, these individuals experience additional difficulties in completing important daily tasks. They can not, for example, easily take families to receive proper medical care ultimately hurting overall public health, and they are less able to engage with children's schools in a time when parent involvement is so crucial to child development.²

Expanding license access promotes public safety, economic development, and family stability for Georgians as we strive to increase economic output and better engage workers in our state. Notably, Georgia residents whose immigrant status excludes them from obtaining driver licenses are estimated to contribute \$352 million annually despite the barrier.³ This community would likely spend additional dollars if they could more easily move around.

Conversely, actions have been taken that have had negative effects. SB350, signed into law in 2008, required law enforcement to identify a person's nationality if caught driving without a license, and it has the potential of making these individuals felons. HB2, signed in 2009, further required county jails to verify citizenship status if found driving without a license.⁴ These bills have decreased trust in law enforcement professionals and reduced their overall ability to protect and serve our communities at large; they increase flight propensity even for minor crimes; they lead to potential vehicle pursuits unnecessarily increasing the risk for all Georgians on our roads; and, they dissuade individuals from reporting crimes as it opens up the potential of having to interact with state or federal agencies. Criminals thrive in such environments creating an uncontrolled and unpoliced group of individuals that affect all Georgians.

Additionally, immigrants and especially Latin Americans are predominantly Christian; a faith that has been a bedrock in the US promoting hard work and stable families. Faith and worship centers are fundamental in strengthening communities and culture. Unfortunately, our work in the community indicates many fear driving, including to churches, reducing attendance and community cohesiveness.⁵ Latino Community Fund Georgia believes immigration issues are important and best resolved at the federal level. Our state's economy, public safety, and families, meanwhile, can better benefit from new or revised driving legislation that does not criminalize drivers attempting to work and raise families.

1 "US Unauthorized Immigrant Population Estimates by State, 2016," Pew Research Center, February 5, 2019, www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/interactives/u-s-unauthorized-immigrants-by-state/.

2 Sofia Carratala, "States Are Making Progress on Expanding Driver's Licenses," Center for American Progress, October 10, 2019, www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2019/10/10/475627/states-making-progress-expanding-access-drivers-licenses/.

3 Jennifer Owens, "Immigrants Make Georgia Stronger and Better Every Day," Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, February 1, 2018, <https://gbpi.org/2018/immigrants-make-georgia-stronger-better-every-day/>.

4 "History of Anti-Immigrant Legislation in Georgia 2006-Present," Project South, December 22, 2019, <https://projectsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Anti-Immigrant-Legislation2006-Present.pdf>.

5 Ronny Rojas and Almudena Toral, "Miedo en la capital del pollo de Estados Unidos," Univision, August 17, 2017, www.univision.com/noticias/inmigracion/temor-en-la-capital-del-pollo-estas-es-la-ciudad-con-mayor-proporcion.