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STAFF: ALYSON WILLIAMS

POLICY MEMO

SB19-139: MORE COLORADO ROAD AND COMMUNITY SAFETY ACT OFFICES

Concerning the issuance by the department of revenue of identification documents to people who are not lawfully present in Colorado on a permanent basis, and in connection therewith, making an appropriation

Policy Issue Summary

The Community Road and Community Safety Act (SB13-251) passed the Colorado legislature in 2013. The act allowed up to six DMV offices to offer undocumented Colorado residents driver's licenses. The program was designed as a self-funded model as the licenses cost \$79 per applicant. Since 2013, the General Assembly has cut the program's budget and used the funds generated from the license fees to fund other priorities. Therefore, the number of participating DMVs in the state has decreased from six to three. This budget cut for the program also included a directive that after the disbursement of 60,000 licenses the Grand Junction and Colorado Springs DMVs are to stop participating in the program. This cap of 60,000 licenses is expected to be reached in 2018, meaning the only participating DMV would be in Denver.

Another issue that has arisen from the original legislation is that the drafting of the bill erroneously excluded immigrants that have Social Security Numbers (SSNs). During the 2017 legislative session, HB17-1206 would have allowed SSNs (which were allowed for some people in the 1990s) to be used to meet the documentation requirement in addition to the current use of taxpayer identification numbers and to allow for licenses to be reissued or renewed with the same process as other licenses (i.e. online). That bill failed to pass, but the issue rose again during the 2018 session with SB18-208, which passed.

A statewide coalition called the iDrive Colorado Campaign formed to support the attempt to restore access to licenses for all undocumented Coloradans and expand access to the program.

Reason for Involvement by the Health District of Northern Larimer County

Involvement Background

The Health District was approached by staff from the Center for Health Progress (formerly known as the Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved) with a request to sign on as a supporter of the iDrive Colorado Campaign during the 2018 legislative session, which the Board supported. This year, staff have been contacted again to be supporters of the campaign and of legislation, SB19-139, which would require these driver's licenses be issued at 10 or more offices that are geographically distributed throughout the state.

Possible Points for Support

There are significant public health and safety benefits of providing Colorado's undocumented immigrants with a form of identification and the ability to drive legally. First, in order to receive a driver's license an individual must pass practical and written examinations, which improve a driver's safety on the road and protect other drivers. Research has demonstrated that California's similar policy in the year after implementation reduced the occurrence of hit and run accidents in the state.¹

¹ Lueders, H., Hainmueller, J., & Lawrence, D. (2017). Providing driver's licenses to unauthorized immigrants in California improves traffic safety. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 114 (16), 4111-4116. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7910/DVN/NVRBC9>

Second, access to transportation can impact the ability of individuals and their families to access health care and secure basic necessities. The 2017 Colorado Health Access Survey documented that challenges with transportation resulted in no care or delayed care for 5.5 percent of Coloradans.² Access to health care is not only important to the patient, but the community as a whole. When the patient has a communicable disease, stopping the spread of the illness is an urgent public health issue.

Third, without access to transportation there may be barriers to accessing healthy foods. There are four Census tracts in Larimer County that are designated food deserts by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.³ These areas include low-income communities that lack ready access to healthy foods; therefore, many have to depend on transportation to access these foods.

The attached white paper entitled “Why providing drivers’ licenses to immigrants is a public health and health care issue: The case for supporting the iDrive Colorado Campaign” provides further detail.

Possible Points for Opposition

Some might say that driver’s licenses are a privilege and not a right to every person within the state. Furthermore, expanding this program could provide another incentive for undocumented immigrants to reside in Colorado. Some have raised concerns that providing licenses would allow these individuals to access public benefits or vote in elections; however, the Colorado program includes a clarifying phrase on the front of the license that makes them invalid for those purposes.⁴

Others fear that expanding the program would allow the licenses to clearly identify undocumented immigrants and deport them to their country of origin.

About this Memo

This memo was prepared by Health District of Northern Larimer County staff to assist the Health District Board of Directors in determining whether to take an official stand on various health-related issues. The Health District is a special district of the northern two-thirds of Larimer County, Colorado, supported by local property tax dollars and governed by a publicly elected five-member board. The Health District provides medical, mental health, dental, preventive and health planning services to the communities it serves. This memo is not a complete analysis of this policy issue. This memo is accurate to staff knowledge as of date printed. For more information about this summary or the Health District, please contact Alyson Williams, Policy Coordinator, at (970) 224-5209, or e-mail at awilliams@healthdistrict.org.

² Colorado Health Institute (2017). *Colorado’s New Normal: Findings from the 2017 Colorado Health Access Survey*. Retrieved from https://www.coloradohealthinstitute.org/sites/default/files/file_attachments/2017%20CHAS%20DESIGN%20FINAL%20for%20Web.pdf.

³ Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (March 2017). *Food Access Research Atlas*. Retrieved from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data/fooddesert>. Accessed on January 15, 2018.

⁴ The phrase states “not valid for federal identification, voting, or public benefit purposes”