

March 19, 2023

To the editor:

The front-page report on the injustice of depriving undocumented residents of driving privileges (March 17) also suggests several other important benefits of the proposed legislation. Among these are the benefits for everyone who uses the roads in Michigan in having drivers who are safe, licensed, and insured. State license and insurance premium revenue will increase (and the number of uninsured motorists will decline). Families benefit by allowing parents to become more involved at their children's schools and by increasing accessibility to health care. Law enforcement benefits in reducing the risk that someone pulled over for a routine traffic stop will react unpredictably because of the fear of not having a valid license or insurance card. The police will also benefit in having reliable identification for the driver. Businesses benefit from being able to rely on workers who have the legal right to be on the roads.

The proposed legislation is an overwhelming benefit for the state. At least 17 other states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have already discovered that benefit and adopted similar legislation, giving them a competitive advantage. Indiana has a bill under consideration which has received broad business and law enforcement support. Among other supporters is the Indiana Farm Bureau, just as the Michigan Farm Bureau supports the legislation here.

We were struck, however, by the comments from Representative Wendzel's administrative aid quoted in the article, suggesting that the representative would not support licenses for anyone without legal status. Michigan already allows any resident with legal status to apply for a license. The distinction Representative Wendzel appears to be drawing based on immigration status misses the point. Legal status has nothing to do with whether someone is a safe driver, or whether someone should be able to buy auto insurance. Depriving otherwise qualified drivers of a license and being able to get insurance does not make the roads safer or promote competitiveness. Nor is it the role of our Michigan legislators to invent ways to punish immigrants because of their legal status. That is the role of federal immigration officials and is subject to federal policy decisions. We elect our representatives to promote the common good of everyone who lives in Michigan. This proposed legislation meets that test.

We hope that the legislation will once again gain bipartisan support and that our elected representatives will join in restoring a privilege that existed until 2006.

Respectfully,

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