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Catholic Conference of Illinois applauds final passage of SB 957, granting temporary driver's licenses to immigrants

CHICAGO – The organization representing Illinois' Catholic bishops today praised final passage of Senate Bill 957, which expands Temporary Visitor Driver's Licenses (TVDL) to undocumented immigrants.

The House passed SB 957 on a 65-46 vote. The Senate previously passed the legislation, so the measure now goes to Gov. Pat Quinn, who has said he will sign it into law.

Catholic Conference of Illinois Executive Director Robert Gilligan said the legislation provides an important safeguard for immigrant families. He noted that many immigrant parents are separated from their children when stopped for a minor traffic violation. Unable to produce a license, they are then deported.

"Too many of our immigrant families have been torn apart by the simple act of driving," Gilligan said. "What hurts one family hurts our entire community, for the family is the building block of society."

TVDLs are currently issued to individuals who have lawful immigration status but no Social Security Number. They can be used only for driving – not for identification – and must be renewed after three years.

Under the bill, immigrants would be required to pay a fee, and pass vision, written and road tests to get a TVDL. They also would need to provide proof of Illinois residency of at least one year, and buy auto insurance.

Approximately 250,000 undocumented, unlicensed drivers live in Illinois.

"This legislation will give our immigrant brothers and sisters the training to safely get to church, work and school," Gilligan said. "All families are safer when every driver is trained, tested, licensed and insured."

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The Catholic Conference of Illinois was created in 1969 to serve as the public policy voice of the Illinois bishops and the six dioceses of the state: Belleville, Chicago, Joliet, Peoria, Rockford and Springfield-in-Illinois.

