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Catholic Conference of Illinois Supports SB 957: Temporary Visitor Driver's Licenses for Undocumented Drivers

Our nation's immigration system is broken. Priests, religious brothers and sisters, parishes and Bishops all know firsthand about the plight and struggles of the undocumented in our communities because of this broken system. Many immigrants come to the Church for comfort, solace and hope when unjust laws tear at the fabric of family life. The family is the building block of society, yet too many of our immigrant families have been torn apart by the simple act of driving. Our laws should be promoting and protecting families now more than ever. One initiative in Illinois to help do this would allow undocumented immigrants to be eligible for a state temporary visitor driver's license (TVDL) via **Senate Bill 957**.

A TVDL is an existing document already available to many foreign-born individuals in Illinois, despite not having a Social Security Number. TVDLs are a different color from regular Illinois driver's licenses and are clearly marked as "not valid for identification." TVDLs only allow persons to drive in Illinois. These elements of the TVDL comply with the federal Real ID Act, which is set to be effective in January 2013.

The Catholic Conference of Illinois supports **SB 957**, which expands eligibility for a TVDL to undocumented drivers who provide information to ensure security and prevent fraud. Such information includes a verifiable passport or consular identification card, and proof of one year of Illinois residency. They must also pay a fee, and pass vision, written and road tests, as well as buy auto insurance. This proposal will allow undocumented immigrants the opportunity to safely and legally get to work and other necessary services.

- ***The dignity of workers and the right to work.*** Individuals must work to provide for their families and contribute to society, and here in Illinois, automobile transportation is often required to hold a job that provides food, shelter, and medical care for families. This basic level of opportunity and compassion should be afforded to all those working in Illinois. Our Catholic faith calls for respect for every human being, regardless of immigration status, and an acknowledgement of the dignity of their efforts to work in order to provide for themselves and their families.
- ***Increased safety on the roads.*** Under this proposal, there is potential for increasing safety and assisting law enforcement by expanding the number of current drivers who are tested and certified.
- A TVDL also will not identify persons as undocumented since a TVDL is already more broadly available to other persons who do have lawful status but also are not eligible for a regular license.

As we support **Senate Bill 957**, we also continue to advocate that the federal government will soon implement just, national immigration laws.