



**Testimony submitted to
Transportation Finance and Policy Committee in support of HF 4
Tuesday, January 10, 2023**

Good afternoon. My name is Martha Castañon, and I am a homegrown Minnesotan. My parents moved here from Texas to work in the fields. I was born here in Minnesota, and I have lived in Moorhead or near here all my life.

I work for the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota (ILCM) as a Senior Accredited Representative. ILCM is a statewide non-profit organization providing free legal services to low-income immigrants, and in my role, I have supported hundreds of immigrants and refugees on the pathway to permanent residence and citizenship.

I also serve as a board member of Minnesota Latino Affairs Council and Center of Rural Development & Policy, a Charter Commission Member for the City of Moorhead, and on the Board of Directors of the North Dakota Chapter of the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention.

I am testifying today in support of HF4. This legislation would make driver's licenses available to all residents of Minnesota who can pass the driver's license examination, regardless of immigration status. That was the law in Minnesota when I was growing up. That should be the law now.

I am the daughter of farmworkers. I grew up working in the fields alongside my parents. My parents and I were citizens then and now. I had uncles and cousins who were immigrants and farmworkers. Some were undocumented back then.

Today, most farmworkers are immigrants and [about half of all farmworkers are undocumented](#).¹

I am proud of the work that my parents did. They helped to build and feed this state and country. Farmworkers today are recognized as essential workers. The people who work in food processing, in poultry plants, and in meatpacking plants are also essential workers.

They need driver's licenses.

¹ "Farm Labor." USDA Economic Research Service, last updated 4/22/2020. Consulted 3/5/2021.

Many undocumented workers have lived here for decades. Their homes and families are here. More than [30,000 U.S. citizen children in Minnesota](#)² have undocumented parents. These parents have the same little daily errands as the rest of us – things we take for granted, like going to the grocery store, getting diapers for the baby, or picking up a sick child from school when the nurse calls.

Every day, their parents face terrible choices: Do I risk my child's health by not going to the doctor – or do I risk my child not having a parent in the country if I get pulled over and then deported? If we care about these Minnesota families, we need to make it possible for them to drive safely—with driver's training and testing and insurance, all made possible by driver's licenses for all.

If we support Minnesota farmers, we have to support them in having skilled workers who can harvest the crops and maintain the dairies. The people who can do this today are immigrants, and many of them are undocumented. Supporting Minnesota farmers means supporting driver's licenses for their workers.

Out here in rural Minnesota, we do not have buses and trains to get to work or the grocery store. We all need to drive. That's essential for us and for our communities. For the sake of undocumented workers, but also for the sake of all of us in rural Minnesota, I ask that you vote for HF 4, Driver's Licenses For All.

Thank you.

² Julie Gelatt and Jie Zong. "A Profile of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population in the United States." (Migration Policy Institute, 11/2018) Consulted 2/25/2021. <
https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/UnauthorizedData-FactSheet_FinalWeb.pdf>