

Testimony at Hearing on Drivers Licenses H.F. 1163

My name is James Erlandson, Pastor of Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in St. Paul, and a leader in ISAIAH, an interfaith organization in Minnesota. As a grandson of immigrants, whose spouse was welcomed as a refugee from Cambodia in 1980, I have come to testify in support of H.F. 1163, which would allow undocumented immigrants who live and work in Minnesota to obtain driver's licenses. Many of these immigrants are essential workers in healthcare, childcare, food service and agriculture, providing critical services during the COVID-19 pandemic. They are our neighbors, who, like us, need to drive their children to school, to go to work, the grocery store or the doctor.

Much of our work in the faith community includes bringing people together, to make our communities safer, and make immigrants and new residents welcome. We are guided by the teachings of scripture, such as: "When an alien, foreigner or immigrant resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the immigrant. The immigrant who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the immigrant as yourself, for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt." (Leviticus 19:33-34). So we aspire to be good neighbors in Minnesota.

Also, as Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27)

The bill proposed in H.F. 1163 would make it possible for thousands of Minnesota residents to drive legally and safely, without fear of arrest for driving without a license. This bill would make us all safer on our roads and highways, because of the training and tests required in order to obtain a license.

The data protections provided in this bill would give undocumented immigrants the confidence they need to apply for drivers licenses, removing the fear that keeps many in the shadows.

For these reasons, I urge this House Committee to pass this bill, to make our immigrant neighbors welcome and to make every Minnesotan safer,