



Driving Authorization Cards

August 2020

Background

In March 2020 the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee assigned our office to evaluate the effects of granting driving privileges to unauthorized immigrants who reside in the state. Requesters of the evaluation asked what the potential effects would be on road safety, automobile insurance, and the state's workforce if unauthorized immigrants were permitted to drive. State law prohibits individuals who cannot prove legal authorized residency in the United States from obtaining a state driver's license.

According to estimates by Pew and the Center for Migration Studies, 35,000–37,000 unauthorized immigrants live within the state of Idaho. Of these individuals, Pew and the Center for Migration Studies estimate that 25,000–27,000 are employed. In 2018 unauthorized immigrants comprised 3.5 percent of Idaho's labor force, primarily working in agriculture, service, and manufacturing and shipping sectors. Though unauthorized immigrants are working, questions remain over the best practice to allow them to safely travel to and from work.

Nationally, 15 states and the District of Columbia have developed driving privilege programs for unauthorized immigrants. All but three of these states have created their program within the past six years. Program elements differ among these 15 states. Elements that can vary from state to state include the cost and length of validity for the cards, the documents required to obtain a card, and requirements to be eligible to participate.

Scope

We will answer the following questions:

What are the demographics of unauthorized immigrants who live in the state?

How would a driving privilege program affect various aspects of the state, such as road safety, automobile insurance, and criminal justice administration?

What are program design options for a driving privilege program and how would different designs affect participation and outcomes of the program?

How much would a program cost to operate, and how much revenue could the program expect to bring in?

Additionally, we will look at the experiences of other states with similar programs and examine implementation challenges, whether programs have been successful in promoting participation, and whether programs have had any discernible influence in road safety, automobile insurance, and criminal justice administration.

Projected completion date: 2021 legislative session