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CONNECT Congratulates Senate on Passage of Safer Driving / Driver's Licenses Legislation Awaits Governor Malloy's Signature

HARTFORD, CT: The Connecticut Senate joined the House and passed a bill that would ensure safer driving for all Connecticut residents by allowing all immigrants, regardless of their federal immigration status, to obtain driver's licenses. CONNECT now awaits Governor Malloy's promised signature.

Father James Manship, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in New Haven and co-chair of CONNECT, said "CONNECT wishes to thank Sen. Looney, Sen. Maynard, Sen. Crisco, and Representatives Candelaria, Lopes and Speaker Sharkey for their leadership in making this happen."

Cecilio Cuapio, a St. Rose parishioner and CONNECT leader, added, "We also thank Senators McKinney and Fasano and their caucus for a dignified debate. We look forward to working with all our elected officials, from both sides of the aisle, Senate and House, to tackle other important issues facing our families and congregations here in Connecticut."

The legislation approved by the Senate is the result of the Safer Driving Campaign, launched by CONNECT, Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut, a broad-based community organization made up of 28 churches, synagogues, and mosques from New Haven and Fairfield Counties.

Governor Malloy has assured CONNECT that he will sign the bill if it is passed by the General Assembly.

State Senator Andrew Maynard, sponsor of the bill, noted that, "Our roads are safer for everyone when Connecticut drivers are licensed and insured, and Connecticut has a responsibility to guarantee the highest degree of public safety for all residents. This bill will ensure that more of those who use our roads to get to work and to support their families acquire a license and purchase insurance."

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“This is an important public safety measure that ensures drivers on the road possess the necessary qualifications and insurance,” said Senator Looney. “Reliable transportation is a necessity in modern life. The need to earn a living does not vanish just because a person does not have the appropriate immigration credentials. Most undocumented immigrants would like to operate vehicles within the law.”

Rabbi Robert Orkand, Senior Rabbi of Temple Israel in Westport and a CONECT leader, said “We are very pleased that the Senate agrees with the House that this legislation benefits all Connecticut residents in terms of road safety, crime prevention, economic development, and quality of life.”

CONECT leader Fr. David Blanchfield, pastor of St. Jerome Catholic Parish in Norwalk, said, “Governor Malloy and Senate and House legislators understand that this is all about common sense. The faster that 54,000 drivers become licensed and insured, the faster that driving becomes that much safer for all Connecticut residents.”

Rev. Anthony Bennett, CONECT co-chair and Senior Pastor of Mount Aery Baptist Church in Bridgeport, said that, “This effort has never been about immigrants only. Because they are here and are driving because they must, Connecticut is making the right choice for all of us. Better to act now, rather than wait for Congress to act on immigration reform -- or not.”

Safer Driving allies of CONECT from around the state include: SEIU 32 BJ, United Action Connecticut, the Naugatuck Valley Project, and the Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry of the Archdiocese of Hartford.

Once Governor Malloy signs the bill, Connecticut will join a growing list of states that have approved similar laws. New Mexico and Washington have had similar laws for over 10 years. Maryland, Illinois and Oregon passed new laws just this year, and Colorado’s legislation also awaits its governor’s signature.

About CONECT:

Founded in November of 2011 at a convention in Bridgeport of 1,500 community faith leaders, CONECT takes action on issues of mutual concern for the common good. It has focused its initial efforts on winning in-state tuition rates for undocumented students, pressing for public hearings on health insurance rate increases greater than 15%, and researching potential action strategies on predatory lending and job training programs. CONECT initiated the Safer Driving Campaign, laying groundwork in late 2011 and 2012, and launched its legislative campaign on January 6, 2013.

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