

Voces de la Frontera: By 11-2 Vote, Racine City Council passes resolution supporting driver licenses for all

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RACINE, WISCONSIN – On Tuesday night, the City of Racine Common Council approved by an 11-2 margin a resolution endorsing the restoration of access to Wisconsin driver licenses for undocumented immigrants and those who have lost their licenses because of inability to pay fines. A similar resolution was passed by the Racine Unified School Board last month. Racine is the first municipality in Wisconsin to formally support the restoration of driver licenses. Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers has said that he will include provisions in his proposed 2019-2021 state budget to restore access to licenses regardless of immigration status. The budget must be approved by the state legislature.

“Many of us are stuck in constant fear of being stopped by the police and not knowing if we’ll get a ticket or be deported,” said Luis Tapia, a student at Horlick High School and member of YES. “My parents wake up every morning to work and have to go all the way to Kenosha. They shouldn’t fear going to work and being pulled over by the police, being detained, and being deported.”

“Many of my family and friends have gone through the struggle of losing their driver’s license over unpaid fines,” said Jacquez Woodley, a student at Horlick High School and member of Youth Empowered in the Struggle (YES), the youth arm of Voces de la Frontera. “A mother shouldn’t lose her driver license for choosing to feed her children as opposed to paying a fine. A father should not have to work day and night to pay off his parking ticket debt and not be able to see his family. When the state chooses to take away a poor, working person’s driver’s license they are

not only taking their license but their dignity – their ability to provide for their families and to continue to be a contributing member of this community.”

“Local government is closest to the people,” said Alderman John Tate II, the sponsor of the resolution. “It is important that we take initiatives and stances that clearly state to our higher levels of government what solutions need to be implemented to support the people we represent at the local level. Restoring driver licenses for all is definitely an issue that affects us at the local level, and that’s why it’s important for the city of Racine to take this position and stand with our residents.”

“This builds momentum for other cities, counties, and school boards to show support for restoring driver licenses,” said Christine Neumann-Ortiz, Executive Director of Voces de la Frontera. “By passing resolutions like this one, our local governments can make sure that our legislators hears the voice of the people.”