

**LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARINGS
ON THE 2019-2020 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL**

Testimony before the New York State Senate Finance Committee
and
The New York State Assembly Ways and Means Committee
on the Transportation Budget

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**Dalila Yeend
Directly Affected CCSM Member**

Representing Green Light NY: Driving Together Coalition



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Columbia County Sanctuary Movement organizes with immigrants and allies to empower, support and defend our communities. Our organization serves as the Green Light NY Regional Coordinator for the Upper Hudson Valley and Capital District

Throughout our work over the last two years we have witnessed multiple cases of immigrant community members being separated from their families and forced into deportation proceedings due to lack of access to a driver's license. Local police departments have detained community members, called Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and held them until ICE arrived. Community members have been harrassed and had their international licenses vandalized by officers, their vehicles towed, incurred economic hardship due to fines and--while in immigration custody--denied due process and their right to a speedy trial in local courts.

Dalila Yeend of Troy will now share her horrendous experience of how a simple traffic infraction resulted in family separation and near deportation.

On May 29th of 2018, I was arrested in the city of Troy for a rolling stop at a stop sign. I was held on this simple traffic violation and handed over to ICE after being released on my own recognizance by a Troy City judge.

I was then held on an ICE detainer in Albany county jail for 3 days before being transferred to Buffalo Federal Detention Center, which is approximately four hours away, for the next two and a half months.

I have sole custody of my two minor children who are American citizens. I was ripped away from my 11 year old daughter Savannah and my 9 year old son Taquan, who might I add suffers from severe mental health disabilities.

For over 80 days my children were shuffled from various houses of my family and friends as not one single person was able to care for them on their own. My own mother had to leave her home and land in South Carolina to come to Troy, NY to help my friends and extended family care for my children. Both my mother and I lost wages on jobs we could have and should have been working.

Every day that I was detained was extremely difficult for myself, my children, my family and my friends for so many reasons, the main one being that we were all unsure if I would be deported to New Zealand. Despite being born and raised in Australia, ICE was seeking to deport me to New Zealand, a country I have no recollection of ever even visiting.

Although I am their mother and sole provider, without the ability to obtain a driver's license or any form of state identification, I am unable to get my children passports. In the event that ICE deported me, or if they decide to deport me in the future, what will happen to my children? Who will care for them? How will I be able to take them with me to a foreign land with no passports?

The Green Light NY: Driving Together initiative means so much more to me than just having a driver's license. It means having a valid form of identification. It means accessibility to simple things like my sons numerous doctors appointments and my daughters meet the teacher nights. It also means that what happened to me might not happen to another family with similar circumstances. That their family may not have to suffer being torn apart for months not knowing what the future holds. For these reasons I wholeheartedly request that the NYS legislature pass legislation for equal access to drivers licenses, regardless of immigration status.