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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
LANSING

JOHN D. CHERRY, JR.  
LT. GOVERNOR

January 30, 2008

The Honorable Andy Dillon  
Speaker  
Michigan House of Representatives  
H-166 State Capitol  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7514

The Honorable Mike Bishop  
Senate Majority Leader  
Michigan Senate  
S-106 State Capitol  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

Dear Speaker Dillon and Majority Leader Bishop:

I am writing to seek your bipartisan support for rapid enactment of amendments to the Michigan Vehicle Code to address significant concerns raised by Michigan businesses and foreign governments regarding an opinion issued by Attorney General Cox on December 27, 2007. In that opinion, the Attorney General determined that only permanent residents may obtain a driver's license in Michigan and that individuals living here legally, but on a temporary basis, must be denied a license. Resulting changes in policy subsequently implemented by the Secretary of State on January 22<sup>nd</sup> now require first-time applicants for a Michigan driver's license or identification card to prove they have established a permanent legal residence in Michigan.

Unfortunately, this change is causing severe disruptions for many Michigan job providers and their employees who are legally in the United States but not permanent residents. Many businesses and foreign government representatives have contacted my office to express their dismay. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation reports that this issue already is detrimentally impacting our state's ability to attract and retain foreign investment and skilled workers. There are currently nearly 400,000 foreign businesspeople, students, and their families in Michigan on visas, many employed in the automotive industry and other important sectors. To conduct business and live their lives effectively, they need to be able to legally drive in Michigan. While we should prevent persons in our country illegally from obtaining a driver's license, it is important that the law be changed quickly to address this problem.

Working together, I am confident that there will be broad bipartisan support for a fix focused on restoring the ability of all legal residents to obtain drivers' licenses and identification cards. I am therefore directing members of my

Letter to Speaker Dillon and Majority Leader Bishop

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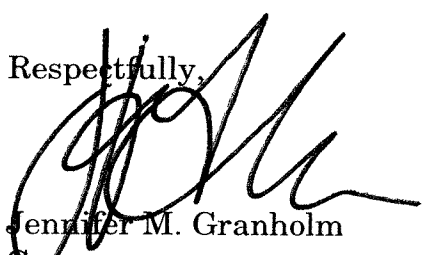
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administration to work with you, the Secretary of State, and the business community to assure that the appropriate amendments to the Michigan Vehicle Code are identified and enacted. I also remain supportive of Secretary Land's effort to authorize an optional enhanced driver's license that will allow Michigan residents to visit Canada without a passport. But given the need to act quickly on fixing the current problem, I am not certain that we can quickly achieve bipartisan consensus on legislation that also includes provisions to implement the federal REAL ID Act.

While I remain committed to working with you and the Secretary of State on the complicated issues surrounding implementation of REAL ID in Michigan, I believe it is important that we instead focus on the specific problems currently facing temporary residents first. Lengthy federal regulations necessary to implement REAL ID were only recently and belatedly released by the Bush Administration. States are currently receiving extensions to delay implementation until December 31, 2009. Furthermore, implementation of REAL ID means significant new costs, logistical hurdles, and time commitments for Michigan businesses, employees, and state government. If we instead focus first on restoring the ability of all legal residents to secure Michigan drivers' licenses and identification cards in a timely fashion, I am confident that we will have laid the foundation for a subsequent bipartisan effort to address issues surrounding federal mandates under the REAL ID Act.

Let's join together across the aisle, act quickly, and demonstrate to Michigan job providers and taxpayers our ability to do the right thing by focusing our efforts on allowing temporary legal residents to again obtain drivers' licenses and identification cards in Michigan. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,



Jennifer M. Granholm  
Governor

c: The Honorable Mark Schauer, Senate Minority Leader  
The Honorable Craig DeRoche, House Minority Leader  
Tim Hughes

JMG/OLC:sl