



Newsletter

Year 02 Edition 14 - July, 2023

Driver's License: Yes, now we can!

The history of immigrants in Massachusetts will be marked and shaped by July 1, 2023. The enforcement of the Driver's License Law for out-of-status immigrants symbolizes the victory of the two-decade struggle in favor of a right that guarantees everyone's safety.

The Brazilian Worker Center is proud to co-chair the Driving Families Forward coalition, which is responsible for this unprecedented achievement for our communities. A new era has begun where drivers who qualify for a standard license can drive on our streets and roads without fear.

Our communities are made of hard workers and families that need to drive for work, taking children to school or the doctor, or for social and community engagements. Now, they will be able to do so and be licensed and insured in Massachusetts. It took many years of hard work for that to become a reality. After July 1st, every driver will have the right to make an appointment on the Registry Motor Vehicles website, gather the requested documents, and schedule the test to obtain the standard drivers' license.

In the last few months, we had countless meetings, made decisions, checked details, challenged ourselves, did our best to facilitate the whole process and



make this a hassle free experience for our communities. Now it's time to enjoy that acquired right with determination.

We cannot forget that we won twice: approving the law, which the governor vetoed, but later endorsed at the polls by the vote of the majority of Massachusetts residents. Our mission is to continue working with our supporters and community to ensure that people have access to this right and are not victims of fraud or malicious people who take advantage of the most vulnerable.

The Brazilian Worker Center reinforces its commitment and counts on everyone's support. Here's to more and more achievements!

Lenita Reason

**Executive Director of the Brazilian Worker Center
Co-Chair of the Driving Families Forward
Coalition**

The correct information for the community

June was the month to bring updated information about the Driver's License Law to the Brazilian community. The Brazilian Worker Center mobilized its team to respond to invitations and establish partnerships to help people better understand the application process and avoid fraud and losses.

Here is a summary of some of these activities:



In partnership with the City of Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs, through the Somerviva program, the BWC held an Information Session on the Driver's License Act at the East Somerville Community School. Executive Director Lenita Reason made the main points of the law, and participants highlighted concerns about disseminating confusing information or people trying to charge for appointments and services that are free in the RMV.

The BWC also held an information session at the Madonna Queen Church, in East Boston, at the invitation of Brazilian Deputy Consul Lauro Beltrão (representing Consul Mourão Santiago). Deputy Danilo Senna and Secretary Alice Bornhofen were also present. On occasion, Lenita Reason explained the documents and translations needed to apply for a driver's license and answered questions from the participants.



Another session took place at the Hudson Assembly of God Ministry. Interaction with church members was possible thanks to the support of pastors Junior and Suraya Pereira. Immigration lawyer Eloa Celedon was also at the event and collaborated with advice on immigration laws. Senator Jaime Eldridge, through his team coordinated by Director Bianca DeSousa, was responsible for organizing the training.



New Rules for Safety at Work

The Brazilian Worker Center hosted the signing ceremony of an ordinance with new safety rules for construction workers in Boston. The law was approved by the City Council and signed by Mayor Michelle Wu.

As of early June, construction and demolition projects in Boston must have detailed safety plans and enhanced enforcement to prevent accidents.

The new measure aims to prevent accidents in the construction area. In 2021, in Boston, for example, the construction fatality rate was two and a half times the average across the country.

Under the ordinance, contractors and builders must also submit safety plans as part of the building permit application on buildings over 50,000 square feet and for demolition projects on buildings four stories or higher. It further requires that the construction site have an OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) trained safety coordinator.

The rules were crafted in collaboration with construction unions, workers' advocates such as the Brazilian Worker Center, construction companies, and OSHA.



BWC integrated Summer Institute training

The Brazilian Worker Center participated during June in the Sixth Annual Edition of the Summer Institute, held by Justice at Work. This year, the theme was focused on conflict resolution in the workplace, titled "Making the Most of Conflict: Dispute Resolution Skills for Workplace Justice." of work).

Cristini Abreu and André Cocô, from the BWC staff, took part in this year's training. BWC has been part of the Summer Institute since its first edition.

The completion certificates were delivered on the last 23rd of June during the closing ceremony.

Dreamers advocated for Equity in education

Students from the Dreamers Fellowship program participated in two activities in June promoted by the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Coalition (MTEC), formed by the Brazilian Worker Center, Centro Presente, and SIM (Stories Inspiring Movement). The first was an educational event hosted by the BWC, which brought together around 40 young people (15 from BWC and 15 from Centro Presente). On occasion, Sabrina Barroso (Executive Director of SIM), Cristian Dubon Solis, and Maria Franco explained what Equity means in Tuition, which is a policy that allows undocumented immigrant students to pay the same tuition fees as residents of the state at public higher education institutions. On June 14, students participated in Thanksgiving at the Massachusetts State House.

They shared stories, walked with signs in front of the State House, and split into groups to visit Senators and Representatives and ask for their support for the bill to become law. One shared story was from Brazilian teenager Giovana Vidal, from BWC Dreamers, who told about the difficulties of coming to the US as an immigrant and the dream of having access to university paying fair prices.

Safety - Dreamers students also had training on safety at work with specialist Rony Jabour. One of the topics covered was fall protection. Participants could have practical examples of how to make the work environment safer.





Homage: Leadership in the DFF Coalition and Yes on Four

In the traditional annual event "Give Liberty a Hand," MIRA (Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition) honored the leaders at the forefront of the campaign to approve a law granting all Massachusetts residents the right to obtain a driver's license.

Our Executive Director, Lenita Reason, along with Chrystel Murrieta Ruiz, received an honor in recognition of her work as co-chair in the Driving Families

Forward coalition and the Yes on Four campaign.

Supporters and leaders of various organizations attended the gala night.

The Brazilian Worker Center is grateful for the recognition from partner organizations and government agencies for their work to support our community.



We are now a "Welcome Center"

The Brazilian Worker Center is now part of a pilot project in partnership with the Government of Massachusetts to assist refugees, becoming a Welcome Center for homeless families.

Many families arriving in the state, mainly from Haiti, sought shelter in emergency centers like the Boston Medical Center; some were already homeless. The BWC will support the first steps of the program.

The BWC will serve as a central entry point for families, especially immigrant families struggling to access basic needs. It will connect them with essential supplies, services, and transportation to a safe place.

The goal is to remove families from hospitals needing housing support, not medical treatment from emergencies. Rising housing costs have increased the demand for shelter. So, the BWC's work is now being expanded through the partnership with the state.

MIC celebrates 3 years of helping the community



The Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative (MIC), co-founded by the Brazilian Worker Center, RIAN Immigrant Center, and Agência Alpha to respond to the Covid pandemic crisis, celebrated 3 years in June.

The three organizations invited another 12, and during this time, they have already impacted the lives of more than 150,000 immigrants.

The MIC celebrated their anniversary by highlighting immigrants' journeys in Massachusetts at a gathering event. During the event, guests watched the screening of two short films: one about Venezuelan asylum seekers on Martha's Vineyard. The other showed the journeys of Haitian immigrants at the Immigrant Family Services Institute in Mattapan. After that, guests participated in a panel where they shared stories of immigrants' struggles to settle in Massachusetts.



JUNE IN MOMENTS



CELEBRATION

The Brazilian Worker Center was at the 12th Annual Celebration & Solidarity Awards at Pipefitters Local 537 in Dorchester. Workers from the New Bedford Fish Industry attended the event. It was marked by the farewell of José Palma (Community and Legal Partnerships Coordinator), who will move to Texas.

GRADUATION

A party with typical Brazilian foods marked the seventh class of Dreamers Fellowship Spring 2023 graduation. The program is a partnership of the City of Boston - Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement (MOIA) - with the Brazilian Worker Center, Centro Presente, and Caribbean Youth Club. Fifteen participants received a certificate of completion from Executive Director Lenita Reason.



PRESS CONFERENCE



A few days before the Driver's License law came into effect, a press conference was held to present the details of the law. The meeting occurred on the Rose Kennedy Greenway, across from the Haymarket RMV in Boston. It featured authorities such as Deputy Governor Kim Driscoll; Motor Vehicle Registration Officer Colleen Ogilvie; Monique Tú Nguyen of the Boston Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement; and the co-presidents of the Driving Families Forward coalition, Lenita Reason (Executive Director of the Brazilian Worker Center) and Chrystel Murrieta Ruiz (Political Coordinator of the 32BJ SEIU).

Our Director highlighted the value of this achievement for the immigrant communities. She warned: "It is essential to avoid fraud and not fall victim to schemes in which people take advantage by charging for reservations at the RMV, as this is impossible."

The total amount to obtain the license will be \$115.00, including the permit, street test, and document issuance. In Massachusetts, approximately 200,000 people can apply for a driver's license.



Cristini Abreu

Receptionist

MEET OUR STAFF

Marlene Cristini Abreu, known as Cristini, has been part of the Brazilian Worker Center (BWC) team since January of this year. Born in Vitória, Espírito Santo, she holds a Bachelor of Laws from the Higher Education Center of Vitória (CESV).

Before moving to the United States three years ago, Cristini worked as a banker and as a consumer protection agent, developing skills in customer service and consumer rights.

At the Brazilian Worker Center, Cristini is responsible for receiving and directing cases, offering guidance, and directing people to the appropriate sectors. She also assists with the Dreamers Fellowship program.

With a legal background, expertise in customer service, and a spirit of service to others, Cristini plays a key role at the Brazilian Worker Center, ensuring that the community receives the support and information it needs.

Cristini is passionate about nature, the beach, and animals. Cherish family moments and love to travel and cook. She is known for her cheerful personality, positive outlook, and contagious energy.

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