

CONCLUSION TO SUMMER ADVOCACY FOR THE DRIVE SAFE BILLS

ANN ARBOR, MI, Sep. 9, 2021 – Earlier this year, Strangers No Longer raised money for a grant to hire on Kim Pulka as a Project Coordinator to provide leadership for the network's Drive SAFE advocacy work. Kim is a recent University of Michigan graduate who started collaborating with SNL through the St. Mary Student Parish Circle. This summer, she also served as Regional Coordinator for Washtenaw County and Detroit with Amy Ketner for the network's COVID-19 outreach project.

Kim's work began with the introduction of the bills in the 2021 legislative session this May. Reaching out to Circle leaders who set up meetings earlier in the year with their State Representatives, she asked them to call on their legislators once again to sponsor the bills before their introduction.

In June, she successfully organized an awareness and training night for students and young professionals at St. Mary Student Parish and the University of Michigan. Conducted over Zoom, the event was attended by 21 students and young professionals who heard from Paul Stankewitz of the Michigan Catholic Conference, both Ann Arbor area State Representatives Yousef Rabhi and Felicia Brabec, and an SMSP parishioner who shared her personal experience with the issue. Kim also developed an advocacy toolkit shared at the event, containing a step-by-step guide to arranging a meeting with a state legislator ([available here](#)).

At the end of August, one of the training participants and fellow SMSP parishioner set up a meeting out of her hometown church in Canton with a legislative aide from the office of Senator Dayna Polehanki. Similarly, another participant and active SMSP Circle member is currently working to have her hometown church in Grand Rapids join forces with a Hispanic-serving church nearby to thank Representative David LaGrand for his support of the Drive SAFE Bills. She hopes to organize the meeting while she is home over Thanksgiving break.

Kim also worked to widen the scope of attention paid to the issue. Unfortunately, media outreach to both Catholic and non-Catholic publications did not result in any publications. However, Kim concluded her summer outreach work by contacting 20 organizations throughout Michigan, requesting statements of support for the bills. Priority was paid to organizations with a logical connection to undocumented labor that donated to politicians holding positions on the House Rules and Competitiveness Committee and the Senate Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (those currently sitting on the bills), and then to construction and agriculture groups throughout the state. She is hopeful that Associated Builders and Contractors of Michigan will soon be releasing a statement of support.

Many new connections were made this summer over advocacy work for the Drive SAFE Bills, and many more were strengthened, especially those with Paul Stankewitz, the Ann Arbor state representatives, and the SMSP parishioners who stepped up to lead this work in their hometown parishes. Kim is grateful for the opportunity she had to participate in this work this summer and for the generosity that created it. She is also excited about the future of the bills and hopes that this is the legislative session to make change happen!