



Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance

Improving commercial motor vehicle safety and enforcement

Expansion of CDLPI to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

CVSA supports expanding Commercial Driver's License Program Implementation (CDLPI) grant eligibility to include Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In order to operate large commercial motor vehicles (CMV) in interstate commerce, drivers are required to obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL). The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) establishes CDL qualification standards, the process for obtaining a CDL and the requirements for the issuance of CDLs by the states in Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 383 and 384. These standards include both a knowledge and a skills test, which are designed to ensure the CDL applicant can demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the information necessary to safely operate a large CMV.

To help jurisdictions support CDL programs that are compliant with the requirements in Parts 383 and 384, FMCSA administers the Commercial Driver's License Program Implementation (CDLPI) grant program.¹ All 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia are eligible to receive funding under this discretionary grant program. However, eligibility for these critical safety program funds does not extend to the U.S. territories.

Currently, the CDL programs in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are not recognized as equivalent to the standards in Parts 383 and 384. In order to guarantee the CDL drivers in each territory are qualified and for each territory's program to be compatible with Parts 383 and 384, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands will need to make critical reforms to their programs.

CVSA supports expanding CDLPI grant eligibility to include Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, which would provide the territories with critical grant funding to help implement a compatible CDL program in their respective jurisdictions. Making the territories eligible under the CDLPI grant program would enable them to improve their existing CDL programs and bring them into compliance with Parts 383 and 384, ensuring those drivers are properly trained and credentialed, and thereby improving highway safety.

Additionally, allowing Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to have CDL programs that adhere to the requirements in Part 383 and 384 will bring uniformity to the application of the safety regulations surrounding CDLs, particularly when it comes to CMV drivers from either territory operating a CMV in one of the 50 states in the U.S. Because their licenses are currently not recognized as equivalent, CDL drivers from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands may end up with two driver's licenses – one from their home territory and one from a state. FMCSA and the states strive for a "one driver, one license, one record" standard for all CDL drivers. Including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in the CDLPI program would enable the territories to improve their CDL programs to bring them into compliance with federal standards and would allow FMCSA to recognize those licenses as equivalent to other U.S. issued licenses, resulting in full reciprocity of CDLs among the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

¹ Commercial Driver's License Program Implementation (CDLPI) Grant. Analysis & Information Online. FMCSA.
<https://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/Grants/CDLPI.aspx>

A qualified driver pool is essential for guaranteeing safety on the roadways. By allowing Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to access funds from the CDLPI program, these territories can issue CDLs consistent with the safety regulations and raise the level of CMV safety in their jurisdictions.