



**TESTIMONY TO THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SB 0523: Occupations and Professions- Licenses, Certificates, and Registration- Immigrants**

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

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The League of Women Voters Maryland supports **SB 523: Occupations and Professions- Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations- Immigrants**. This bill would allow all qualified students to obtain professional and occupational licenses, regardless of their documentation status.

The League supports a system for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status, including citizenship, by paying taxes, learning English, studying civics, and meeting other relevant criteria. While policy reforms, including a path to legal status, remain unachieved, the League does not support deporting unauthorized immigrants who have no history of criminal activity. Without the ability to obtain professional licenses, undocumented immigrants will be hampered in their ability to be productive parts of our society.

At present, Maryland supports the education of eligible undocumented students by allowing them to attend community college tuition-free, and to pay in-state tuition rates at state colleges and universities. **However, without a social security number, these students are unable to obtain professional licensure in Maryland**, thus limiting both their ability to advance in their profession, and to assist in meeting the growing workforce needs in our state.

There are roughly 10,000 undocumented students enrolled in higher education institutions in our state, and most pursue fields that require some type of licensure. But those who are studying for a career as a Certified Nursing Assistant, for example, must move to another state in order to obtain certification and a job; Maryland has barred students from obtaining CNA certification if they do not have a social security number.

In 2020, 1.4 million people living in Maryland were age 60 or older, and that number is projected to rise to 1.7 million people by 2030. The healthcare needs of our rapidly aging population will continue to grow, and the available workforce to meet those needs must also grow.

Maryland already has a severe healthcare labor shortage, and it is expected to worsen. Substantial numbers of workers left the healthcare field during the pandemic, and our growing aging population makes that labor shortage even more urgent. Passage of Senate Bill 523 will enable undocumented students to obtain the certification that will enable them to work and advance in their chosen profession, and to remain in our state while doing so.

The League urges the committee to give a favorable report to SENATE BILL 523.