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FAIR is a nonprofit public interest organization working to end illegal immigration and to set levels of legal immigration that are consistent with the national interest



FEDERATION FOR AMERICAN IMMIGRATION REFORM

February 16, 2022

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chair
West Miller Senate Building
Room 2
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Pinsky and other distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Shari Rendall and I am the Director of State and Local Engagement at the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). FAIR is a non-profit, non-partisan organization of concerned individuals who believe that our immigration laws must be reformed to serve our nation's interests.

FAIR advocates for immigration policies that reduce the harmful impact of illegal immigration on national security, public safety, the economy, jobs, education, healthcare and the environment.

Founded in 1979, FAIR has three million members and supporters nationwide including approximately 12,300 in Maryland. On behalf of our members and supporters, I am writing to express FAIR's opposition to Senate Bill (SB) 523, the occupational and professional licensing bill. Granting an occupational or professional license to illegal aliens frustrates the purpose and objectives of federal immigration law.

Federal law is plainly designed to preclude those here illegally from receiving commercial and professional licenses, as public benefit under Title 8 U.S.C. § 1621. Granting an occupational or professional license to illegal aliens frustrates the purpose and objectives of federal immigration law. Illegal aliens have no legal right to remain in the United States and are prohibited from being employed. Moreover, illegal aliens could be subject to deportation. Providing a professional or occupational license to an individual who could be deported at any time needlessly could jeopardize those who are depending on that individual for services.

In order to be eligible for many occupational and professional licenses there is generally a requirement of good moral character. Those in the country illegally have already violated American laws to enter the country and continue to violate the law by remaining. It is contradictory to regard continuous law-breaking as meeting this requirement.

Additionally, many occupational and professional licenses require the practitioner to take an oath to uphold our laws. Someone here illegally cannot in good faith take that oath because they breaking the law simply by



their continued unlawful presence. Nor can someone administer such an oath in good faith to someone they know is violating it and intends to continue violating it.

Granting an occupational or professional license to someone in the country illegally takes jobs away from American citizens and legal immigrants. In December 2021, Maryland's unemployment rate was five percent while the national average for the month was just under four percent. The Maryland legislature should focus on getting the state's legal workforce back to work instead of providing jobs for those in the country illegally.

Moreover, providing occupational or professional licenses to those in the country illegally incentivizes still more illegal immigration. With higher than average unemployment, Maryland should not be encouraging more illegal immigration. In 2017, FAIR estimated Maryland taxpayers spent more than \$1.7 billion on illegal aliens – that number has undoubtedly gone up since. The more incentives Maryland adopts, like professional and occupational licensing, the greater the costs.

Finally, giving someone here illegally an occupational or professional license obliterates the distinction between those who are legally present and those who are in violation of federal law. Legal immigrants have worked hard, in some cases for many years and at great expense, to follow the rules and come here the right way. This bill is unfair to them as it disregards those efforts and rewards those who have ignored the requirements Congress has imposed to live and work here legally.

It is for these reasons FAIR opposes SB 523 and urges an unfavorable report. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we may be of assistance. I may be reached via email at srendall@fairus.org or by phone at 202-328-7004.

Sincerely,



Shari Rendall