

Testimony in Support of SB 0523

February 16, 2022

Ninfa Amador-Hernandez
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TO: Chair Pinsky, Vice-chair Kagan, and Members of the Educational, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

RE: In Support of SB 0523

FROM: Ninfa Amador-Hernandez, undergraduate student

Dear Chair, Vice-chair and committee members,

My name is Ninfa Amador-Hernandez and I am writing to you to express my interest in and support of this legislation, SB0523- Occupations and Professions, Licenses, Certificates, and Registration for Marylanders. According to the Vera Institute of Justice, immigrants make up 15% of the total population in Maryland¹. Undocumented immigrants make up about 29% of the total immigrant population². One in four children in Maryland has at least one immigrant parent. More than 75% of immigrants are in the labor force making about one in five members of the state's labor force an immigrant. Immigrants households earned about \$35.5B and contributed about \$3.3B in state and local taxes. Number don't lie. As you can see, the immigrant population is a powerful force in business and in Maryland's economy. However, currently, there are laws in place that are prohibiting Maryland residents from earning more or being able to fully and actively participate in the state's economic development. Every year about 2,000 undocumented high school students graduate and decide not to seek higher education because of the restrictive measures of a higher education³. About 10,000 undocumented student are enrolled in higher education through the provision granted under section 15-106.8 of the MD Education Article, and have received professional degrees. These Marylanders have been nurtured by the state's public school system from elementary school through college, however will be unable to join the workforce and use their talents to further the state's economic and cultural development.

Supporting SB0523 would

- **Improve the lives of every child of an immigrant family and household**

¹ <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/profile-foreign-born-population-baltimore.pdf>

² <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-maryland>

³ <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/state/maryland/>

- **Improve the state's economic development**
- **Improve basic living standards for educated and professional workers without immigration status but with all the qualifications needed to enter the workforce**
- **Close the gap between white students and minority students at the higher education level**

This bill, SB0523, would allow thousands of immigrant professionals the opportunity to support their local communities and their families. Being licensed by the state would allow these workers to have a better quality of life through stable employment which would propel the next generation of Marylanders to have better living standards and livelihoods.

I was educated in the Maryland public school system through elementary school, however, due to a lack of opportunities for my family, I moved to Virginia when I was 10 and finished the rest of my public education in Virginia. By the time I had graduated high school, I saw many more opportunities here in Maryland, compared to Virginia. Maryland is a welcoming state and its previous policies towards inclusion and development have allowed it to flourish, however, if we do not keep the momentum going, Maryland will lose valuable asset-its immigrant professionals- just like my family decided to leave.

I am a 22-year-old undergraduate student, resident of Maryland, studying at an out-of-state institution. I have called Maryland home for the past 4 years and would like to keep living here and develop my professional career regardless of my immigration. I am qualifying myself through my education to succeed in my field, **please support SB 0523 so that many more young professionals like myself can thrive, uplift our communities, and support our state economy.**

Sincerely,

Ninfa Amador-Hernandez

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