

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 0187:
Health Occupations - Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations - Immigrants**

TO: Honorable Senator Griffith, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Elizabeth Weber, Acting Executive

DATE: Tuesday, February 7th, 2023

The Southwest Partnership is a coalition of seven neighborhood associations and seven anchor institutions in the Southwest Baltimore neighborhoods of Barre Circle, Franklin Square, Hollins Roundhouse, Mount Clare, Pigtown, Poppleton, and Union Square. We work to build a vibrant, diverse, awesome community of choice. One of our areas of workforce is workforce development--connecting area residents to good, local jobs. Most of those jobs are in healthcare.

Current Maryland law requires all applicants for health occupational licensure to provide a Social Security Number; however, this requirement is not aligned with what's established constitutionally for licensing authorities, or with Maryland's economic interest, or with national trends, and lastly, it's not aligned with the state's investment in the immigrant community.

The Southwest Partnership strongly supports Senate Bill 0187 as a means of expanding health occupational licensure to our immigrant community for the following reasons:

1. Maryland is home to a large immigrant community. According to the American Immigration Council, one in seven Maryland residents is an immigrant - or, almost one million individuals, comprising 15% of the population. Maryland has made good strides in providing great opportunities to these communities, for example, by expanding in-state tuition and free community college access to all Marylanders, regardless of immigration status.
2. By not allowing all immigrants to have access to health occupational licenses that they are qualified for, the State is losing its investment as businesses lose not only competent labor, but also revenue. According to the Higher Ed Immigration Portal, there are 237,845 undocumented immigrants in the state - 15,485 of them who are DACA eligible. The spending power of just the DACA eligible population is over \$285 million, with a tax contribution of \$36 million.
3. Expanding access to health occupational licensing for immigrants would not only be in the State's best economic interest, but it would align with developments in other states that have expanded access, such as New Jersey—an individual does not need a Social Security Number to apply for licensure there.
4. Occupational licensing boards are not immigration enforcement authorities; their purpose is simply to determine if an individual possesses all qualifications to perform and safely serve the public in a particular profession.

Therefore, Maryland should follow the lead of other states that have removed Social Security Number requirements from health licensing applications, and thus expand the labor pool in our State, and unlock untapped potential for economic growth. **We strongly urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 0187.**

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Weber
Acting Executive Director
Southwest Partnership