

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB187

Health Occupations - Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations - Immigrants

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

From: Janelle Wong

Date: February 6, 2023

I submit this testimony as a state resident, teacher, and scholar of immigration and Asian American Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. This legislation prohibits a state occupational or professional licensing board or other government agency in the State from denying an occupational or professional license, certification, or registration to an immigrant if the individual meets certain requirements.

As my University of Maryland colleague, Ewaoluwa Ogundana has written in a policy analysis post for *New America*, the state of Maryland provides some critical avenues to education for immigrants who face barriers to work authorization via the Maryland DREAM Act. However, it also constrains many of those very same students once they complete their education by barring them from obtaining the professional licenses necessary to practice in their fields. This is against the state's ethical and economic interests. As Ogundana's research shows, nearly a quarter of occupations require some kind of license. Many workers in the state are only able to provide services as a result of meeting licensing requirements. Without the ability to obtain professional licenses, too many workers in our state will have the qualifications necessary to serve our populations' needs in terms of medical care, dental care and other critical contributions, but not be able to put their training into practice to benefit our state residents.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, there are an estimated 225,000 immigrants in Maryland who face restrictions on licensure. I am the current Director of the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Maryland, College Park and have advocated for the expansion of immigrant rights, including for many Asian American immigrants. Many of these students are pursuing careers in fields that require licensure, including in health occupations.

As an educator and a state resident, I strongly SUPPORT SB187 and **I strongly urge a favorable report on House Bill SB187.**