

**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: Dora Currea, Co-Chair of the WNC Sanctuary Ministry

DATE: Tuesday, February 7th, 2023

The Washington National Cathedral Sanctuary Ministry provides support and solidarity for our immigrant brothers and sisters. The Ministry was formed in response to resolutions passed by the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church in support of immigrants and calling for meaningful reform of U.S. immigration law, policy, and practice. A key part of this reform calls for incorporating immigrants into our communities and providing them the opportunities to contribute and thrive.

The Sanctuary Ministry is a group of prayerful advocates who have created a network that serves the 88 parishes of the diocese of Washington covering the District of Columbia and Prince George's County. Our fastest growing parishes, those serving Prince George's County, include migrant communities that would benefit greatly from this legislation. If enacted, it would allow their congregation members to thrive as vital contributing members of our community. For this reason, we strongly support House Bill 0136 as a means of expanding occupational licensure to our immigrant community, of recouping investment in educational opportunities the state has funded, and of equitably serving our increasingly diverse population.

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 WNC Sanctuary Ministry 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.

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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.

For the reasons above and our profound belief that all should be treated fairly, justly, and respectfully despite immigration status, we strongly urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 0187.

Respectfully submitted,

Dora Currea, Co-Chair of the WNC Sanctuary Ministry