

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 454:
Health Occupations - Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations -
Immigrants**

TO: Hon. Jocelyn Pena-Melnyk, chair, and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Jerry Kickenson, Treasurer and Montgomery County Coordinator, Congregation Action Network

DATE: February 20, 2023

We are writing in **support of House Bill 0454, Health Occupations - Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations - Immigrants**, on behalf of the [Congregation Action Network](#). The Congregation Action Network is a network of faith communities in Washington, DC, and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs acting in solidarity to end detention, deportation, profiling, and criminalization of immigrants and demanding and upholding justice, dignity, safety, and family unity. With over 75 congregations and a thousand members throughout the capital area, including over 25 congregations with thousands of members in Montgomery and Prince George's counties, we live our faith in advocacy for and solidarity with our immigrant neighbors.

Current Maryland law requires all applicants for occupational licensure to provide a Social Security Number; however, this requirement is not aligned with the constitutionally established jurisdiction of licensing authorities, with Maryland's economic interest, with national trends, and with the state's investment in the immigrant community. **The Congregation Action Network strongly supports House Bill 0454 as a means of expanding health occupations licensure to our immigrant community, of recouping investment in educational opportunities our state has funded, and of equitably serving our increasingly diverse population.**

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 a measure of opportunity to these communities, for example, by expanding in-state tuition and free community college access to all Marylanders, regardless of immigration status.

However, by not allowing all immigrants to obtain an occupational license that they are otherwise qualified for, the State is not only losing the contributions of immigrants who could otherwise work and pay higher taxes, but is wrongly denying opportunity to fellow Maryland residents.

Expanding access to occupational licensing for immigrants would align with developments in other states that have expanded access, and that have reciprocity agreements for licensure with



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Maryland. An individual does not need a Social Security Number to apply for licensure in New Jersey, for instance, a state with multiple licensure reciprocity agreements with Maryland.

Occupational licensing boards are not immigration enforcement authorities; their purview is simply to determine if an individual possesses all qualifications to perform and safely serve the public in a particular profession. Maryland should follow the lead of other states that have removed Social Security Number requirements from licensing applications, and thus expand the labor pool in our State, increase economic activity, and provide equity of access to **all** Maryland residents. **We strongly urge a favorable report on House Bill 0454.**

Respectfully submitted,
Jerry Kickenson
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