



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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**HB 454**

**DATE: February 22, 2023**

**SPONSOR: Delegate Lopez**

**ASSIGNED TO: Health & Government Operations**

**CONTACT PERSON: Leslie Frey** (leslie.frey@montgomerycountymd.gov)

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

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### **Health Occupations - Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations - Immigrants**

Family Law-Article §119.3 currently requires the disclosure of a Social Security number when an applicant applies for an occupational or recreational license from the State. This section of State law is to ensure that the licensee or applicant for a license is not in arrears for paying child support, however, the same verification can be performed by the Maryland Department of Human Services if the applicant submits an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) rather than a Social Security number (SSN) if they do not have one. House Bill 454 allows for the substitution of an ITIN for the SSN for applicants for a health occupations license- this would enable an otherwise qualified Maryland resident who has an ITIN to receive a health occupations license.

Montgomery County government supports the occupational licensing of Maryland residents who hold ITINs and is particularly interested in legislative solutions to increase the number of linguistically and culturally competent health care, behavioral health, and social service professionals serving County residents, including efforts to facilitate career pathways and reduce unnecessary professional licensure barriers. Montgomery County, as a provider of direct services to County residents in addition to being a funder of services for many community providers, has acutely felt the need to improve access to culturally and linguistically appropriate mental and behavioral health providers for residents across the State. The shortage of such providers has resulted in long wait times for residents to access mental health care from providers who share common cultural backgrounds or who speak languages preferred by those seeking mental health treatment. Research has shown that “[c]ultural and linguistic competence in the delivery of mental health services can have a profound effect on access to and quality of care among ethnic/racial minorities. Vital for the delivery of such services is a diverse workforce that also represents the population.”<sup>1</sup> House Bill 454 is a tool to enable trained health care providers who can help meet these needs of our state’s residents to enter the health care workforce as licensed professionals.

Montgomery County respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 454.

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<sup>1</sup> Marquine, MJ and Jimenez, D. *Cultural and linguistic proficiency in mental health care: a crucial aspect of professional competence*. Int Psychogeriatr. 2020 Jan; 32(1): 1–3. Accessed at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7755080/>