

Transit Immigrant Assistance
1323 Midwood Place, Silver Spring, MD 20910
Roxanne Weiss on behalf of TIA -301-565-4196

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 0454:
Health Occupations - Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations - Immigrants**

TO: Chair Joseline Peña-Melnyk and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Roxanne Weiss, Co-Chair, Transit Immigrant Assistance

DATE: Monday, February 20, 2023

Transit Immigrant Assistance was founded in 2017 in response to a high volume of immigrants arriving at the Greyhound Bus station in Silver Spring, MD with literally nothing, from the Southern Border.

Transit Immigrant Assistance strongly supports House Bill 0454 as a means of expanding occupational licensure to our immigrant community, of recouping investment in educational opportunities our state has funded, and of equitably serving our increasingly diverse population.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, Maryland is the home to nearly a quarter million undocumented immigrants. Why not make it easy for these mostly young, vibrant individuals to obtain licensure so that they may personally provide for their families and start building their lives and so that they can start enjoying the American dream? As long as Maryland continues this backward policy, groups like TIA and Direct Support for Immigrants, a Takoma Park non-profit, will continue to support the needs of our new neighbors - but make no mistake, these new arrivals would like nothing better than working for what they want rather than asking for a handout.

I am sure that our state legislators can appreciate that by allowing undocumented persons to train and ultimately obtain licenses to work, monies will not only accrue to our state coffers but our State will also address severe workforce shortages. Should this legislation pass and become law, organizations such as ours, will be freed up from providing basics like food, clothes, furniture, occasionally rent, etc. as is currently happening, and be able to sustain our immigrant community's longer term needs by helping our new neighbors settle in, by facilitating their children getting signed up for school, by using funds to help with immigration paperwork, medication, and more long term planning issues. We understand passing this legislation is not a panacea, but we

Transit Immigrant Assistance

1323 Midwood Place, Silver Spring, MD 20910
Roxanne Weiss on behalf of TIA -301-565-4196

truly believe it will go a long way in quickly getting new arrivals to self sufficiency - the American dream!

Maryland should prohibit State Health Occupational or Professional Licensing Boards from denying an occupational or professional a license, certification, or registration to an immigrant if the individual meets the requirements to perform the specified job duties. Health Licensing Boards should allow applicants to use an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number in lieu of a Social Security Number on occupational licensure applications. For these reasons, **we strongly urge a favorable report on House Bill 0454.**

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Weiss, Co-Chair
Transit Immigrant Assistance