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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB187: Occupations and Professions – Licenses – Immigrants

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Wednesday, March 29, 2023 1:00 PM

Maryland is struggling with crisis-level staffing shortages in health care. According to the *Baltimore Banner*, our [wait times for emergency rooms are the worst in the nation](#). This is not a post-pandemic anomaly. A 2018 study by UMD's Health Care Workforce Working Group listed Maryland as [1 of 4 states anticipated to have a shortage of nurses exceeding 10,000 by 2025](#). Although exacerbated by the pandemic, it was not the cause of our critical health care staffing shortage.

Driving this crisis are our antiquated laws that unreasonably restrict access to health licenses. Current law requires citizenship in order to be granted a health occupations license. Consequently, qualified professionals are choosing to practice elsewhere. **Immigration status is neither a fair nor adequate determinant of one's merit as a professional.**

[SB187](#) would allow qualified professionals to practice-- regardless of immigration status. By removing citizenship as a prerequisite to licensure and accepting an Individual Taxpayer Identifier Number (ITIN) as an alternative to a Social Security number, Maryland could address its critical staffing shortage. Candidates would still be required to meet all credentials and qualifications.

By passing this bill, Maryland would join **five states** (California, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, & New Jersey) that have laws to allow qualified individuals, regardless of immigration status, to obtain occupational or professional licensure. **An additional nine states** (Arkansas, Florida, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah, West Virginia, & Wyoming) allow licensure for certain immigration statuses for certain professions.

Maryland is losing bright and talented health care professionals to opportunities in other states. Students at our prestigious universities are left with no choice but to move elsewhere to start their careers. Additionally, out-of-state (or international) professionals who are deciding where to move and pay taxes can't even **consider** Maryland.

According to The Baltimore Sun...

[Thursday's editorial in The Baltimore Sun](#) (February 2, 2023) made the case well:

"Maryland taxpayers already pay for public education for such individuals. And now, just at the moment when they can contribute to society in such positions as home health care aide or nurse, we would deny them that opportunity? At least 14 other states have

chosen to toss citizenship as a requirement for occupational licensure. Maryland should join the club.”

SB187 passed the Senate 40-3 on March 20, 2023. Its cross-file, HB454, passed the House 106-32 on March 16. The bills are identical as amended.

I urge a favorable report on SB187 to address the critical need for licensed health care workers in Maryland.