

**House Bill 454 – Health Occupations – Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations –
Immigrants**

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

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House Health and Government Operations Committee

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On behalf of the University of Maryland School of Nursing, we appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 454. This legislation will prohibit a health occupations board from denying a license, certification, or registration to an immigrant if the individual meets certain requirements and will require that boards permit the use of either a Social Security Number **or** an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) for a health occupations license, certification, or registration. I also serve as chair of the Education and Pathways Advisory Group of the Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland and the issue of use of an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number has been discussed within the Advisory Group, particularly as it relates to helping to address the shortage of nursing professionals.

At present, for purposes of nursing licenses, Maryland is a party to the multi-state Nurse Licensure Compact. Among the benefits of the Compact is that it provides licensed nurses holding a multi-state nursing license the ability to practice in other states within the compact. However, the Nurse Licensure Compact currently requires potential licensees to provide a Social Security Number in order to be licensed. Therefore, in accord with this provision, the Maryland Board of Nursing requires applicants for licensure to provide a Social Security Number. As a consequence, individuals who might otherwise be deemed qualified to practice nursing in Maryland cannot be licensed in our State. In fact, there are individuals who apply and are admitted to the University of Maryland School of Nursing and upon successful completion of their course of study and graduation cannot be licensed in the State of Maryland.

By establishing a Maryland-only license for nursing and allowing applicants for the Maryland-only license to use either a Social Security Number or a federal Individual Taxpayer

Identification Number, individuals who would otherwise meet the requirements for licensure, but who are not eligible for a Social Security number, including non-citizens and some immigrants, would have a pathway for practice in Maryland. This is particularly important as we seek to retain Maryland residents who been educated within our State as much-needed health professionals in Maryland.

A number of states have enacted laws providing licenses for certain populations, such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, those who arrived as children but have not received deferred action, legal immigrants, and/or unauthorized immigrants. California, Illinois, and Colorado are among States that allow individuals with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number to obtain professional and occupational licenses. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, at least fifteen states have enacted legislation to provide or improve professional licenses to certain populations, such as DACA recipients, legal immigrants, and /or unauthorized immigrants.

I would also note the large immigrant population estimated to be eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrive Program in Maryland. The Migration Policy Institute indicates that as of December 2021, there were 17,000 DACA-eligible individuals in Maryland and that 13,000 of these were youth and adults who were immediately eligible due to meeting both age and educational criteria. Namely, they were 15 to 39 years old as of December 2021 and either enrolled in school or had at least a high school diploma or equivalent.

HB 454 is consistent with existing Maryland laws which now permit undocumented students, including DACA recipients, to pay in-state tuition rates at state colleges and universities, provided they meet specific requirements including obtaining a high school diploma or GED in the State. Maryland also permits state-funded financial aid to unauthorized immigrant students.

In addition to undocumented individuals, Maryland's health care system benefits enormously from graduates of foreign nursing schools. Allowing use of the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number would provide another pathway for licensure and employment of those graduates of foreign nursing schools who meet the educational and language proficiency requirements of Maryland.

CGFNS International, Inc., (formerly known as the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools) is recognized as world's leading standards-setting and credentials evaluation

organization for nursing and allied health professionals wishing to live and work across borders. It supports foreign educated healthcare professionals by assessing and validating their academic and professional credentials.

In November 2022, CGFNA released its inaugural report on nurse and healthcare migration to the United States, including data derived from applicant information submitted to CGFNS International's *VisaScreen Service* (VS) and its Credentials Evaluation Services (CES) programs, two leading pathways through which a foreign-educated nurse or healthcare professional can migrate to and work in the US. They reported the following:

- The top U.S. states where nurse migrants sought licensure were Texas, Illinois, Florida, Montana, and Maryland.
- The majority of *VisaScreen* applicants in 2022 were registered nurses (81%) and many were migrating on permanent employment-based green cards (70%).
- VS applicants came from 116 countries in FY 2022, a 44% increase from 2021 and a 109% increase from 2018.
- The majority of nurses applying for VS in 2022 possessed a baccalaureate nursing degree, or higher.
- Health workers from the Philippines comprised nearly 60% of VC applications, and it should be noted that many otherwise qualified Foreign-Educated Health Professionals wait years for visa processing and seek employment elsewhere.

CGFNA has predicted increased migration of nursing professionals worldwide due to issues of political instability and economic opportunity, war and conflict, natural disasters and climate emergencies.

I thank the Committee for its thoughtful consideration of this important measure, appreciate the opportunity to indicate the School of Nursing's strong support for this legislation and urge a *favorable* report on HB 454.

For additional information, please contact:

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