

Doctors for Camp Closure



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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: Kate Sugarman, Doctors for Camp Closure

DATE: Monday, February 20, 2023

My name is Kate Sugarman and I am a leader with the Maryland chapter of Doctors for Camp Closure. Our mission is to end the inhumane treatment of those coming to our borders, asking for our help, and to meet immigrants with compassion, dignity, and a fair, efficient application process. Our goal is to protect the health of applicants, the sanctity of the family bond, and the virtue of an honest, transparent application for legal entry to the US carried out in a manner that sufficiently protects the most vulnerable. As physicians, we recognize how important it is for immigrants to be able to work and to be economically self-sufficient, which is why we strongly support House Bill 0454.

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. **Doctors for Camp Closure 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.**

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 losing its investment as businesses lose not only competent

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labor, but on revenue. According to the Higher Ed Immigration Portal, there are 237,845 undocumented immigrants in the state - 15,485 of them who are DACA eligible. The spending power of just the DACA eligible population is over \$285 million, with a tax contribution of \$36 million.

Expanding access to occupational licensing for immigrants would not only be in the State's best economic interest, it would align with developments in other states that have expanded access, and that have reciprocity agreements for licensure with Maryland. An individual does not need a Social Security Number to apply for licensure in New Jersey, 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, and unlock untapped potential for economic growth. **We strongly urge a favorable report on House Bill 454.**

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Sugarman