

# Testimony For SB0072

Honorable Delegates

Pleased enter a favorable report **with amendment** for SB0072.

I support

- prohibiting a health occupations board from requiring additional evidence of English proficiency as a condition for licensure, certification, or registration **ONLY IF if an applicant holds a valid, unrestricted license, certification, or registration from another state that requires evidence of English proficiency;** and
- requiring each health occupations board that requires evidence of English proficiency to post a statement on their website that an applicant may not be required to provide additional evidence of proficiency;.

In general I highly support the position of the Right to Life organization whose representative testified as follows:

Marylanders should be able to trust that their health care needs are in the hands of the professionals with the best possible educational standards that would include the ability to listen and understand the patient and the ability to communicate effectively with the patient. The United States of America is primarily an English speaking country, and patients should expect the ability to communicate in English with health care professionals. Translators are provided for the patients who do not speak English. English competency is necessary to effectively communicate to the patient about their health status and any conditions that exist along with treatments, procedures, and medications. Language barriers could lead to adverse outcomes for the patient.

Standards vary from state to state, and the comparison of competency tests is subjective. Maryland needs to maintain its own competency standards and allow each medical board to set their competency standards. The lives of patients are at stake if there is miscommunication or an omission of information between the health care professional and the patient.

When I first read the bill, I thought that the sponsor was eliminating the need for English proficiency as a part of licensing and certification. However, if, and only if, we can rely on the certification standards of other states who have verified that the applicants were proficient in English before transferring to Maryland, then I can support this bill.

**I would like to see this bill amended to include a statement similar to:**

**If any of the Boards have reason to believe that they cannot rely on any other state's competency and rigor in determining English proficiency, the Maryland Board can request the applicant to supply proof of English competency.**

I would assume that new applicants would still need to provide proof of English proficiency.

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As long as the boards are ensuring English proficiency, then please enter a favorable report with amendment for SB0072.

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