

# SENATE BILL 608

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CF HB 579

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By: **Senators Augustine and Smith**

Introduced and read first time: January 23, 2025

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

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## A BILL ENTITLED

AN ACT concerning

### **Criminal Procedure – U Nonimmigrant Status Petitions**

FOR the purpose of altering the requirements for certification of a U Nonimmigrant Status Petition; altering the individuals eligible to request a certain official to certify victim helpfulness on a certain form relating to certification of a U Nonimmigrant Status Petition; authorizing disclosure of certain information under certain circumstances; and generally relating to U Nonimmigrant Status petitions.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Criminal Procedure

Section 11–930 and 11–931

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2018 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

BY adding to

Article – Criminal Procedure

Section 11–932

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2018 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

### **Article – Criminal Procedure**

11–930.

(a) In this part the following words have the meanings indicated.

(b) “Certifying entity” means:

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



- (1) a State or local law enforcement agency;
- (2) a State's Attorney or deputy or assistant State's Attorney;
- (3) any other authority that has responsibility for the detection, investigation, or prosecution of a qualifying crime or criminal activity; or
- (4) an agency that has criminal, **CIVIL, FAMILY, OR ADMINISTRATIVE** detection [or], investigative, **OR PROSECUTORIAL** jurisdiction in the agency's respective areas of expertise, including child protective services, **ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES**, the Commission on Civil Rights, and the Maryland Department of Labor.

(c) "Certifying official" means:

- (1) the head of a certifying entity;
- (2) an individual in a supervisory role who has been specifically designated by the head of a certifying entity to provide U Nonimmigrant Status certifications on behalf of that entity; or
- (3) any other certifying official defined under Title 8, § 214.14(a)(3)(i) of the Code of Federal Regulations.

(d) **"FEDERAL U VISA GUIDELINES" MEANS FEDERAL STATUTES, REGULATIONS, POLICIES, PUBLICATIONS, GUIDANCE, AND INSTRUCTIONS RELATING TO U NONIMMIGRANT STATUS, INCLUDING 8 U.S.C. § 1101(A)(15)(U), 8 U.S.C. § 1184(O), 8 U.S.C. § 1367, 72 FED. REG. 53014 (SEPT. 17, 2007), 8 C.F.R. § 214.14, AND 8 U.S.C. § 1255(M)(1).**

(E) "Qualifying crime" includes a criminal offense for which the nature and elements of the offense are substantially similar to the criminal activity described in subsection [(e)] (F) of this section and the attempt, conspiracy, or solicitation to commit the offense.

[(e)] (F) "Qualifying criminal activity" means criminal activity under § 1101(a)(15)(U)(iii) of the United States Code **OR THAT IS DESCRIBED IN FEDERAL U VISA GUIDELINES.**

11-931.

(a) **(1)** For purposes of filing a petition with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services for U Nonimmigrant Status, a victim or the victim's parent, guardian, [or] next friend, **ATTORNEY, VICTIM ADVOCATE, OR OTHER REPRESENTATIVE** may request a certifying official of a certifying entity to certify victim helpfulness on a Form I-918, Supplement B certification if the victim:

[(1)] (I) was a victim of a qualifying criminal activity and has been helpful, **IS BEING HELPFUL, OR IS LIKELY TO BE HELPFUL** [to the certifying entity] in the detection, investigation, or prosecution, **INCLUDING SENTENCING**, of that qualifying criminal activity;

[(2)] (II) was under the age of 16 years on the date that an act that constitutes an element of qualifying criminal activity first occurred and the victim's parent, guardian, or next friend has been helpful to the certifying entity in the detection, investigation, or prosecution, **INCLUDING SENTENCING**, of that qualifying criminal activity; or

[(3)] (III) is incapacitated or incompetent and the victim's parent, guardian, or next friend has been helpful to the certifying entity in the detection, investigation, or prosecution, **INCLUDING SENTENCING**, of that qualifying criminal activity.

**(2) (I) A VICTIM OF A QUALIFYING CRIME OR A QUALIFYING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY IS ELIGIBLE FOR CERTIFICATION.**

**(II) IF A VICTIM IS APPLYING FOR CERTIFICATION AS A RESULT OF BEING A VICTIM OF MORE THAN ONE QUALIFYING CRIME OR QUALIFYING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY, EACH QUALIFYING CRIME AND QUALIFYING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY SHALL BE LISTED ON THE CERTIFICATION.**

**(b) FOR PURPOSES OF DETERMINING HELPFULNESS FOR A REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATION UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION, AN INDIVIDUAL SHALL BE CONSIDERED HELPFUL IF, SINCE THE INITIATION OF HELPFULNESS, THE INDIVIDUAL HAS NOT UNREASONABLY REFUSED TO COOPERATE OR FAILED TO PROVIDE INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE REASONABLY REQUESTED BY A CERTIFYING ENTITY.**

**(C)** For purposes of determining helpfulness under subsection (a) of this section, if the victim or the victim's parent, guardian, or next friend is assisting, has assisted, or is likely to assist law enforcement authorities in the detection, investigation, or prosecution of qualifying criminal activity, the victim or the victim's parent, guardian, or next friend shall be considered to be helpful, to have been helpful, or likely to be helpful.

[(c)] **(D)** If the victim or the victim's parent, guardian, or next friend satisfies the criteria specified under subsection (a) of this section, the certifying official shall fully complete and sign the Form I-918, Supplement B certification and, with respect to victim helpfulness, include:

(1) specific details about the nature of the crime **DETECTED**, investigated [or], prosecuted, **OR SENTENCED**;

(2) a detailed description of the victim's **PAST OR PRESENT** helpfulness or likely helpfulness to the detection, investigation, or prosecution, **INCLUDING SENTENCING**, of the criminal activity; and

(3) copies of any documents in the possession of the certifying official that evince the harm endured by the victim due to the criminal activity.

**[(d)] (E)** (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, the certifying entity shall certify or decline certification of the Form I-918, Supplement B certification within 90 days after receiving a request under subsection (a) of this section.

(2) If a noncitizen victim is the subject of removal, exclusion, or deportation proceedings or subject to a final order of removal, exclusion, or deportation, the certifying entity shall certify or decline certification of the Form I-918, Supplement B certification within 14 days after receiving a request under subsection (a) of this section.

**[(e)] (F)** A current investigation, the filing of charges, a prosecution, or a conviction is not required for a victim or the victim's parent, guardian, **[or]** next friend, **ATTORNEY, VICTIM ADVOCATE, OR OTHER REPRESENTATIVE** to request and obtain the Form I-918, Supplement B certification under this section.

**(G) THERE IS NO STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS FOR WHEN A QUALIFYING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY OCCURRED RELATIVE TO THE REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATION OF VICTIM HELPFULNESS UNDER THIS SECTION.**

**(H) IF THE CERTIFYING OFFICIAL CANNOT DETERMINE WHETHER THE APPLICANT IS A VICTIM OF A QUALIFYING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY OR DETERMINES THAT THE APPLICANT DOES NOT QUALIFY FOR CERTIFICATION, THE CERTIFYING OFFICIAL SHALL PROVIDE A WRITTEN EXPLANATION TO THE VICTIM OR THE VICTIM'S PARENT, GUARDIAN, NEXT FRIEND, ATTORNEY, VICTIM ADVOCATE, OR OTHER REPRESENTATIVE SETTING FORTH REASONS WHY THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE DOES NOT SUPPORT ISSUANCE OF THE CERTIFICATION.**

**[(f)] (I)** A certifying official may **DENY OR** withdraw the certification provided under this section only **[on refusal to provide information and assistance when reasonably requested of:**

(1) the victim; or

(2) the victim's parent, guardian, or next friend if the victim was under the age of 16 years on the date that an act that constitutes an element of qualifying criminal activity first occurred or if the victim is incapacitated or incompetent] **IF, AFTER CONSIDERING THE TOTALITY OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE PERSON PROVIDING THE HELPFULNESS UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION UNREASONABLY REFUSED TO COOPERATE OR FAILED TO PROVIDE INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE**

REASONABLY REQUESTED BY A CERTIFYING OFFICIAL.

(J) (1) NOTWITHSTANDING ANY OTHER PROVISION OF THIS SECTION, A CERTIFYING OFFICIAL'S COMPLETION OF A CERTIFICATION FORM MAY NOT BE CONSIDERED SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE THAT AN APPLICANT FOR A U OR A T VISA HAS MET ALL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THAT VISA, AND COMPLETION OF A CERTIFICATION FORM BY A CERTIFYING OFFICIAL MAY NOT BE CONSTRUED TO GUARANTEE THAT THE VICTIM WILL RECEIVE IMMIGRATION RELIEF UNDER FEDERAL LAW.

(2) COMPLETION OF A CERTIFICATION FORM BY A CERTIFYING OFFICIAL ONLY SERVES AS VERIFICATION OF THE FACTUAL INFORMATION RELEVANT FOR A FEDERAL IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY FOR A U OR A T VISA.

(3) BY COMPLETING A CERTIFICATION FORM, THE CERTIFYING OFFICIAL ATTESTS THAT THE INFORMATION IS TRUE AND CORRECT TO THE BEST OF THE CERTIFYING OFFICIAL'S KNOWLEDGE.

(4) THIS SECTION DOES NOT LIMIT THE MANNER IN WHICH A CERTIFYING OFFICIAL OR CERTIFYING AGENCY MAY:

(I) DESCRIBE WHETHER THE PERSON HAS BEEN HELPFUL TO THE CERTIFYING ENTITY; OR

(II) PROVIDE ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THE CERTIFYING OFFICIAL OR CERTIFYING ENTITY BELIEVES MIGHT BE RELEVANT TO THE ADJUDICATION OF A U OR A T VISA APPLICATION.

[(g) A certifying entity may disclose information relating to a victim who is seeking or has obtained U Nonimmigrant Status only:

(1) in order to comply with federal law, court order, or a discovery obligation in the prosecution of a criminal offense; or

(2) after adult petitioners for U Nonimmigrant Status or adult U Nonimmigrant Status holders have provided written consent for the disclosure of the information.

(h) (1) Except in cases of willful or wanton misconduct, a certifying entity or certifying official who acts or fails to act in good faith in compliance with this section has the immunity from liability described under § 5-643 of the Courts Article.

(2) A person who brings an action to seek enforcement of this section may not be awarded attorney's fees or costs unless the action demonstrates willful or wanton

misconduct by a certifying entity or certifying official.]

**11-932.**

**(A) A CERTIFYING ENTITY OR A CERTIFYING OFFICIAL MAY DISCLOSE INFORMATION RELATING TO A VICTIM WHO IS SEEKING CERTIFICATION, OR WHO IS SEEKING OR HAS OBTAINED U NONIMMIGRANT STATUS ONLY:**

**(1) TO COMPLY WITH FEDERAL LAW, A COURT ORDER, OR A DISCOVERY OBLIGATION IN THE PROSECUTION OF A CRIMINAL OFFENSE; OR**

**(2) IF APPLICABLE, AFTER THE VICTIM HAS WAIVED CONFIDENTIALITY PROTECTIONS UNDER THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT UNDER 34 U.S.C. § 12291(B)(2).**

**(B) THIS SECTION MAY NOT BE CONSTRUED TO ALTER OR DIMINISH THE DUTIES AND REQUIREMENTS OF A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER, A STATE'S ATTORNEY, OR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL FROM DISCLOSING EXCULPATORY INFORMATION TO A DEFENDANT IN A CRIMINAL CASE.**

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2025.