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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB523/HB533

“Occupations and Professions - Licenses, Certificates, and Registration - Immigrants”

To: Chair C.T. Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee"

From: Raolat Akinbiyi

- I have worked in the educational sector for a number of years and now more than before, it is very evident that in certain fields it is not enough to have a degree. We have found that individuals who truly have a desire to excel in their professions don't just stop at the degree but continue to learn by obtaining professional licenses. In some cases, the degree does not allow for enough job opportunities for one to make a living off of. Undocumented students already have so many obstacles against them and their desire to be the best they can be in their chosen field should not be one. I work with students every day that are working to get graduate degrees and professional licenses and it takes a very determined person to choose to dedicate the energy, time, and work to pursue these things. If undocumented students desire to go this route, they should be allowed to with no issues. Obtaining a professional license is difficult and it speaks volumes that there are people willing to do so but aren't able to.
- The entire country is going through a season professionals have termed as "The Great Resignation." There are significant amounts of people leaving their jobs everywhere and we find that jobs are requiring more certifications and skills that some people simply don't have. On the other hand we have a vast number of undocumented students ready and desperate to get into the workforce but laws like the one Maryland has has stifled their career growth. There is a need in Maryland for more workers with professional licenses and there is a need for undocumented students to have laws that help them gain these licenses. It is not fair that they are ready to do more in their field but simply do not have a chance to.
- Although I am an American citizen, I grew up in communities that had a lot of undocumented students. I have also had the privilege to teach students that are undocumented. It is not fair that they do not have access to the same things other students do. The fact that they want to pursue professional licenses speaks to the work

ethic. Maryland would be better off with dedicated individuals that want to excel in their careers. Not only will this help them as individuals, it also helps the bottom line in Maryland. Many states have had to offer big incentives for workers to come to their state to do certain jobs. If Maryland does not get rid of this rule stopping undocumented students from obtaining profession licenses, there will be a high chance of brain drain. They will go to other states that actually want to see them succeed and that will ultimately negatively affect Maryland as a whole.

- This legislation would benefit so many families, organizations, and the whole state of Maryland. I respectfully urge a favorable report of HB533.