Professional Standards Should Be Based on Qualifications, Not Birthplace

Position Statement in Support of House Bill 533

Given before the House Economic Matters Committee

Every Marylander deserves the chance to get a good job that pays enough to support a family – regardless of their race, ethnicity, or where they were born. However, the labor market we have today is far from this ideal. While the majority of workers of all backgrounds have seen poor wage growth over the last half century, our policy choices have pushed the greatest harms onto workers of color, women, workers with disabilities, and workers belonging to other marginalized groups. While occupational licensing standards are an important tool to ensure that workers in specialized industries have the requisite qualifications, they can unfairly close doors of opportunity if poorly designed. The Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports House Bill 533 because it would ensure Maryland's occupational standards are based on qualifications, not birthplace or immigration status.

Adopting policies that afford all residents, regardless of their immigration status, the opportunity to thrive helps Maryland foster community well-being and strengthen its economy. Maryland is home to about 250,000 residents who are undocumented,[i] and these individuals make significant contributions to our communities and economy. More than half of Maryland's undocumented residents have lived in the U.S. for more than 10 years and about one in seven have lived here for 20 years or more.[ii] Immigrants make up nearly 20 percent of Maryland's workforce, and immigrant-led households pay $3 billion a year in state and local taxes.[iii] It is critical that Maryland remain a welcoming place for immigrants to build their lives.

However, the rules of our economy today arbitrarily and unjustly lock workers born outside the United States out of job opportunities, exposing them to financial hardship and preventing them from participating as full members of their communities:

- College graduates in Maryland who are not United States citizens face unemployment rates (the share of the labor force actively looking for a job but unable to find one) at least double those of their U.S. citizen counterparts.[iv]

Unemployment Rates of College Graduates in Maryland by Immigration Status		
	U.S. Citizens	**Non-Citizens**
Associate Degree	3.7%	8.3%
Bachelor Degree	2.6%	5.6%
Advanced Degree	1.7%	3.4%
Source: MDCEP analysis of 2015–2019 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata. Sample consists of adults ages 25 years or older.		

- At every educational level, Maryland workers who are not United States citizens take home lower wages and salaries than their U.S. citizen counterparts.[v]

Median Wage and Salary Income of Maryland Workers by Immigration Status				
	U.S. Citizens	Non-Citizens	Difference	% Difference
Less Than High School	$29,000	$27,000	-$2,000	-6%
High School or Equivalent	$38,000	$29,000	-$9,000	-23%
Some College	$45,000	$31,000	-$14,000	-31%
Associate Degree	$49,000	$30,000	-$19,000	-39%
Bachelor Degree	$66,000	$40,000	-$27,000	-40%
Advanced Degree	$90,000	$73,000	-$16,000	-18%
Source: MDCEP analysis of 2015–2019 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata. Sample consists of adults ages 25 years or older.				

Occupational licensure rules are one among many barriers standing in the way of Maryland workers who were born outside the United States. Policymakers must take a multipronged approach to build a truly just, inclusive, and strong labor market. House Bill 533 represents one important step in the right direction.

For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully requests that the House Economic Matters Committee make a favorable report on House Bill 533.

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Equity Impact Analysis: House Bill 533

Bill summary

House Bill 533 would prohibit denial of occupational licensure or other certification to a qualified worker based only on immigration status.

Background

Maryland is home to about 250,000 residents who are undocumented,[vi] and these individuals make significant contributions to our communities and economy. More than half of Maryland's undocumented residents have lived in the U.S. for more than 10 years and about one in seven have lived here for 20 years or more.[vii] Immigrants make up nearly 20 percent of Maryland's workforce, and immigrant-led households pay $3 billion a year in state and local taxes.[viii]

Equity Implications

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Impact

House Bill 533 would likely **improve racial, immigration, and economic equity** in Maryland.

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[i] Pew Research Center. "Mexicans decline to less than half the U.S. unauthorized immigrant population for the first time." June 12,2019. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/12/us-unauthorized-immigrant-population-2017/

[ii] Center for Migration Studies. "State-Level Unauthorized Population and Eligible-to-Naturalize Estimates." http://data.cmsny.org/state.html

[iii] American Immigration Council. "Immigrants in Maryland." 2017. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants_in_maryland.pdf

[iv] MDCEP analysis of 2015–2019 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata. Sample consists of adults ages 25 years or older.

[v] MDCEP analysis of 2015–2019 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata. Sample consists of adults ages 25 years or older.

[vi] Pew Research Center. "Mexicans decline to less than half the U.S. unauthorized immigrant population for the first time." June 12,2019. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/12/us-unauthorized-immigrant-population-2017/

[vii] Center for Migration Studies. "State-Level Unauthorized Population and Eligible-to-Naturalize Estimates." http://data.cmsny.org/state.html

[viii] American Immigration Council. "Immigrants in Maryland." 2017. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants_in_maryland.pdf

[ix] MDCEP analysis of 2015–2019 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata. Sample consists of adults ages 25 years or older.

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