



Center for Salud/Health and Opportunity for Latinos

Johns Hopkins Centro SOL

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TO: The Honorable CT Wilson, Chair
House Economic Matters

SB0523 / HB0533

Favorable

FROM: Monica Guerrero Vazquez, MS,MPH
Executive Director

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Centro SOL the Center for *Salud*/Health and Opportunity for Latinos supports **SB0523 / HB0533 – Occupations and Professions – Licenses, Certificates, and Registration – Immigrants**. These two bills support granting professional licenses for eligible undocumented students many of whom have been paying in-state tuition at any state college and university in Maryland.

We support **SB0523 / HB0533 for the following reasons:**

- Centro SOL’s mission is to promote equity in health and opportunities for all Baltimoreans, including immigrants. In 2014, Centro SOL established the youth pipeline programs with the vision to diversify the workforce in healthcare and science. Almost 150 young immigrant Latinos have completed the program, graduated high school and pursued their science degrees, and 120 of those young Latinos have pursued a degree in healthcare and engineering thanks to the policies allowing them to access college education. However, many are not able to pursue their professional licenses, leaving them in a disadvantaged position for career development. This is a missing opportunity to promote diversity and inclusion of great talents in our State, while the growing immigrant population is not able to receive the services they need.
- Maryland bars undocumented students from obtaining professional licenses, even though it allows access to scholarships and in-state tuition. This is a barrier by the state that limits undocumented students from fully serving their community after obtaining higher education credentials.
- Since the majority of all professional licenses are given at state and local levels, Maryland has the jurisdiction and authority to change course and allow undocumented students to obtain professional licenses. According to the National Occupational Licensing Database, almost one-in-four jobs require some sort of license to practice in the United States, and in Maryland according to the BLS, almost 40 percent of workers there hold jobs that require occupational licenses.



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- In the past, undocumented Marylanders could work in a few jobs that required licenses as long as they had a tax ID number, but these jobs are often lower-paid and have few pathways to accelerate in the field.
- This is a win-win legislation. This is a great opportunity to support workforce shortages in Maryland in areas of critical importance to the Latino community – including healthcare and education. Many counties in the state report insufficient numbers of bilingual, multicultural staff in areas like education and healthcare. According to the Chamber of Commerce, 607,000 people (2.3 percent) in Maryland left their jobs in 2021. This is an increase of 0.4 percent over the previous year. Quits accounted for 66.8 percent of Marylanders who separated from their jobs in 2021.

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