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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0533

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

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

From: Olga Michelle Lainez

- I am a student at Trinity Washington University. I am here today because my grandmother dared to flee from El Salvador after the civil war. I will forever be in debt to her. I am deeply invested in this legislation because I am pursuing my bachelor's in criminal justice and a minor in psychology to become an immigration attorney. However, I will not be able to practice law if HB0533 is not passed.
- I am one of more than 427,000¹ students who are currently on their post-secondary education journey. I am asking the committee to vote in favor of this bill for the benefit of not only our careers but for the state of Maryland. You have the power to allow students to obtain professional and occupational licenses to better our communities.

Passing this legislation will benefit Maryland in 2 significant ways:

1. Maryland allows undocumented students to access higher education which is more than most states. 90% of undocumented students are enrolled in undergraduate programs, and 10%² percent of students are enrolled in graduate-level programs; However, the barrier faced at the end of their education is just inconsistent with the original goal. If Maryland removes this barrier, new minds and perspectives will go into the workforce. Many of us undocumented immigrants possess the problem-solving skills needed to solve social issues Maryland faces.
2. In my experience, I completed my hours to become a CNA, but that dream was quickly taken from me since Maryland does not allow undocumented immigrants to obtain nursing licenses. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a shortage of nurses. Many doctors and nurses who have DACA live with the fear that if they become

¹ Higher Ed Immigration Portal “Undocumented Students in Higher Education” (March 2021)

² Higher Ed Immigration Portal “Undocumented Students in Higher Education” (March 2021)

undocumented they will not be able to practice medicine anymore.³ Undocumented students who are pursuing medical licenses will be able to benefit from this legislation if passed.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass HBO533 and give us undocumented immigrants a chance to better Maryland's communities and economy.

³ STAT "For Undocumented students, a community to help them build health carrers" (August 2021)