

TESIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB454, HEALTH OCCUPATIONS – LICENSES, CERTIFICATES, AND REGISTRATIONS - IMMIGRANTS

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 454, Health Occupations – Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations - Immigrants. I am a Facilitator for the Immigration Action Team of Indivisible of HoCo; I am a member of the Executive Committee of the Howard County Coalition for Immigrant Justice; I am an immigrant, a veteran (mos medic) and a retired attorney. We support passage of HB454.

Our nation and our State of Maryland are facing a grave shortage of health care professionals. Recently, I had reason to use the Emergency room at Howard Hospital, Columbia and had to wait more than 10 hrs. in a very crowded and unhygienic waiting room, because of shortage of health care staff.

Maryland has wisely allowed the education of resident immigrants, rightly expecting to benefit from a well-educated population. It would be irrational to prevent resident immigrants to practice in the health fields, if they are qualified for a particular professional practice, simply because they lack a Social Security Number. To be clear, those are taxpayers, having a Taxpayer Identification Number. Allowing an immigrant to apply for a professional license using his Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) in lieu of a SSN would be of great benefit to the immigrant applicant and a valuable source of employees in the health fields. A certain disconnect exists currently where an Maryland residing immigrant with an TIN can study with in-state tuition and other such benefits, but is unable to proceed with a career of value to the immigrant and to the State's welfare. Please pass HB187 and integrate the educated and qualified immigrant in our economy.

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