

Astrid Mendoza, Hyattsville, 20783

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 454:
Health Occupations - Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations - Immigrants**

TO: Honorable Representative Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Astrid Mendoza

DATE: Wednesday, February 22nd, 2023

My name is Astrid Mendoza and I am a sophomore Psychology major at the University of Maryland. I am also one of the 7,470 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients. I was 2 years old when I arrived in the US so I have grown up as if I was born here. My parents did a good job of dealing with the legal details in private so I did not notice the difference until the time came to apply to college. As time passes, I am faced with more paralyzing truths about what it means to be undocumented regardless of whether I grew up in the US or not. Now attending University, I realized that I have a passion for helping others and am currently interested in pursuing a career in counseling psychology. Although I know of all of the barriers I may face due to my status, I still dream of this possibility. Just the thought of the SB523 Bill being passed brings me an indescribable excitement. I respectfully urge you to help me and thousands of others continue dreaming and some day even make our dreams our reality. Thank you for your time.

Current Maryland law requires all applicants for health occupational licensure to provide a Social Security Number; however, this requirement is not aligned with what's established constitutionally for licensing authorities, or with Maryland's economic interest, or with national trends, and lastly, it's not aligned with the state's investment in the immigrant community.

I strongly supports House Bill 454 as a means of expanding health occupational licensure to our immigrant community for the following reasons:

1. Maryland is home to a large immigrant community. According to the American Immigration Council, one in seven Maryland residents is an immigrant - or, almost one million individuals, comprising 15% of the population. Maryland has made good strides in providing great opportunities to these communities, for example, by expanding in-state tuition and free community college access to all Marylanders, regardless of immigration status.
2. By not allowing all immigrants to have access to health occupational licenses that they are qualified for, the State is losing its investment as businesses lose not only competent labor, but also revenue. According to the Higher Ed Immigration Portal, there are 237,845 undocumented

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immigrants in the state - 15,485 of them who are DACA eligible. The spending power of just the DACA eligible population is over \$285 million, with a tax contribution of \$36 million.

3. Expanding access to health occupational licensing for immigrants would not only be in the State's best economic interest, but it would align with developments in other states that have expanded access, such as New Jersey—an individual does not need a Social Security Number to apply for licensure there.
4. Occupational licensing boards are not immigration enforcement authorities; their purpose is simply to determine if an individual possesses all qualifications to perform and safely serve the public in a particular profession.

Therefore, Maryland should follow the lead of other states that have removed Social Security Number requirements from health licensing applications, and thus expand the labor pool in our State, and unlock untapped potential for economic growth. **I strongly urge a favorable report on House Bill 454**

Respectfully submitted,

Astrid Mendoza