

---

BILL NO: House Bill 454  
TITLE: Health Occupations – Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations – Immigrants  
COMMITTEE: Health & Government Operations  
HEARING DATE: February 22, 2023  
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

---

The Women's Law Center of Maryland (WLC) is a statewide nonprofit law firm that seeks to ensure the safety, economic security, and autonomy of women. Our mission is advanced through advocacy and also through direct legal representation of survivors of domestic violence. Among the free legal services we provide is our MEDOVI project, which serves foreign-born victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking who are seeking immigration status independent of their abusers who typically threaten our clients with deportation or refuse to provide the documentation necessary to obtain legal status in an attempt to maintain control over their relationship. These foreign-born victims face unique challenges; cultural differences, language barriers, employment obstacles, and fear of deportation frequently prevent them from seeking help.

All too often we see clients who are immigrants with a high degree of educational and professional achievement that are under-employed, or unemployed, and not utilizing their experience in the fields in which they are trained. One barrier for immigrant residents fully participating in the workforce and employing their training is the requirement that some occupational licenses from the State are contingent on citizenship of the United States. House Bill 454 would remove that requirement for occupations regulated by a health occupations board, allowing all Maryland residents to fully utilize their skills and education to the betterment of their families and our communities.

For the foregoing reasons, the WLC strongly supports HB 454 and urges a favorable report.

*The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, legal services organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change, working to ensure physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy for women in Maryland.*