



Committee: House Health and Governmental Operations Committee

Bill Number: Senate Bill 187 - Health Occupations - Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations - Immigrants

Hearing Date: March 29, 2023

Position: Support

The Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) strongly supports Senate Bill 187 – Health Occupations – Licenses, Certificates, and Registrations – Immigrants. The bill would remove an unnecessary barrier to licensure for nurses.

In a review of the national data from the National Council of the State Boards of Nursing, at least 19 states do not require social security number for nursing licensure. Those states include a diverse range such as: Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Texas.ⁱ

Maryland’s law under Family Article § 10-119.3 requires social security numbers for all occupational licensure. This requirement creates significant barriers for at least two groups of nurses and nursing students who can legally reside in the U.S.:

- Maryland hospitals encounter great difficulty in recruiting foreign-born nurses. Instead of moving directly to Maryland, a foreign-born nurse must obtain a license from another state and then obtain licensure in Maryland through a reciprocity arrangement known as endorsement. This cumbersome arrangement means that Maryland is losing foreign-born nurses to other states, exacerbated our state’s nursing professional shortage which has reached a crisis level;

- Foreign-born nursing students who are in the U.S. on student visas may have difficulty obtaining certification as nursing assistants, thus denying them the ability to gain valuable clinical experience while in school. Foreign-born graduates from Maryland nursing schools also face barriers remaining in Maryland to become a licensed registered nurse. These nursing graduates may either return to their home country or seek licensure in another state.

The bill will resolve this issue by modifying Family Article § 10-119.3 to allow applicants to have a social security number, individual tax identification number (ITIN), or alternative documentation as allowable under federal law. After getting licensed, an individual must notify the board once they obtain a social security number or ITIN. This proposed language change would open Maryland's doors to qualified foreign-born nurses who are legally able to work in the U.S., but cannot obtain a nursing license in Maryland.

We have reviewed the sponsor's amendments which are clarifying in nature. We ask for the Committee to adopt these amendments and move favorably on the bill. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

¹ https://www.ncsbn.org/public-files/2021_Licensure_Survey.pdf