



## Statement of Support for Provisions Expanding Access to Occupational Licensure in HB 136

World Education Services supports the provisions in HB 136 that would expand access to occupational licenses in Maryland to individuals who have obtained an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).

World Education Services (WES) is a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to helping international students, immigrants, and refugees achieve their educational and career goals in the United States and Canada. For more than 45 years, WES has set the standard of excellence in the field of international academic credential evaluation. Through WES Global Talent Bridge, the organization joins with institutional partners, community-based organizations, and policymakers to help immigrants and refugees who hold international credentials fully utilize their talents and education to achieve their academic and professional goals. Through its grantmaking, impact investing, and partnerships, the WES Mariam Assefa Fund seeks to advance economic and social inclusion for immigrants and refugees.

Currently, Maryland state law requires all applicants for occupational licensure to provide a Social Security number. However, this requirement is not aligned with the constitutionally established jurisdiction of licensing authorities. An occupational licensing board's mandate is to determine whether an individual possesses the professional qualifications to perform the duties of a specific job.

Immigrant workers who do not have Social Security numbers are negatively impacted under current law. As the Maryland Board of Nursing testified in 2022, individuals who have lawful status and residence and have obtained an ITIN are currently prohibited from joining the workforce in Maryland for regulated professions.<sup>1</sup>

HB 136 would help address workforce shortages by increasing access to careers in fields that require licensure, such as health care. In February 2022, Maryland's hospitals had over 3,900 nursing vacancies—a 50 percent increase since August 2021.<sup>2</sup> The state is meeting just 53 percent of

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<sup>1</sup> "RE: SB 523 – Occupations and Professions – Licenses, Certificates, and Registration – Immigrants – Letter of Information." Maryland Board of Nursing, February 17, 2022. [https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte\\_testimony/2022/fin/1GhdBmkwDm17eGx\\_JludM0MgUPbRZSBaL.pdf](https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2022/fin/1GhdBmkwDm17eGx_JludM0MgUPbRZSBaL.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Higgins, David M. "Maryland Hospitals face worker shortage, doubled since summer 2021," *Southern Maryland Chronicle*, February 2, 2022, <https://southernmarylandchronicle.com/2022/02/02/maryland-hospitals-face-worker-shortage-doubled-since-summer-2021>.



local need for primary care physicians,<sup>3</sup> 29.4 percent for dentists,<sup>4</sup> and 21.9 percent for mental health workers.<sup>5</sup> By 2030, Maryland is projected to need an additional 1,052 primary care physicians—a 23 percent increase—to meet local need.<sup>6</sup>

Immigrants have education, credentials, and experience that could help meet immediate workforce needs and bolster the state’s long-term economic vitality. Policymakers must open pathways so that immigrants can reach their career goals in Maryland.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement of support.

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<sup>3</sup> “Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs).” KFF. Kaiser Family Foundation, November 11, 2021. <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/primary-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22%3A%22Location%22%2C%22sort%22%3A%22asc%22%7D>.

<sup>4</sup> “Dental Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs).” KFF. Kaiser Family Foundation, November 11, 2021. <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/dental-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22%3A%22Location%22%2C%22sort%22%3A%22asc%22%7D>.

<sup>5</sup> “Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs).” KFF. Kaiser Family Foundation, November 11, 2021. <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/primary-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22%3A%22Location%22%2C%22sort%22%3A%22asc%22%7D>.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Graham Center, “Maryland, Projecting Primary Care Physician Workforce,” <https://www.graham-center.org/content/dam/rgc/documents/maps-data-tools/state-collections/workforce-projections/Maryland.pdf>.