

Emily Fine
Riverdale, MD 20737

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 0136:
Child Support Enforcement - Occupational and Recreational Licenses - Taxpayer
Identification Number**

TO: Hon. Luke Clippinger, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Emily Fine

DATE: Tuesday, January 24, 2023

Maryland needs the contributions of all its residents. A recent report from the Maryland Hospital Association indicates that one in four nursing positions in the state of Maryland is currently unfilled. Where I live in the D.C. suburbs, vacancy rates are more than 26%. Given historic staffing shortages in the healthcare industry, Maryland should be doing everything it can to ensure qualified Maryland workers are able to obtain the professional licenses they need to participate in the workforce.

Current Maryland 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, with Maryland's economic interest, with national trends, and with the state's investment in the immigrant community. **I strongly support House Bill 0136 as a means of expanding occupational licensure to our immigrant community, of recouping investment in educational opportunities our state has funded, and of equitably serving our increasingly diverse population.**

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 a measure of opportunity to these communities, for example, by expanding in-state tuition and free community college access to all Marylanders, regardless of immigration status. For the 9,730 undocumented students enrolled in higher education in Maryland, these measures have been critical to allowing them to obtain their education.

However, by not allowing all immigrants to obtain an occupational license that they are otherwise qualified for, the State is losing its investment. Individuals who were educated in the state and would stay and work if they had the opportunity may leave for other more welcoming and accommodating states, causing Maryland to lose both critical workers and their economic contributions. According to the Higher Ed Immigration Portal, there are 237,845 undocumented 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.

Expanding access to occupational licensing for immigrants would not only be in the State's best economic interest, it would align with developments in other states that have expanded access,

and that have reciprocity agreements for licensure with Maryland. An individual does not need a Social Security Number to apply for licensure in New Jersey, a state with multiple licensure reciprocity agreements with Maryland.

Occupational licensing boards are not immigration enforcement authorities; their purview is simply to determine if an individual possesses all qualifications to perform and safely serve the public in a particular profession. Maryland should follow the lead of other states that have removed Social Security Number requirements from 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 0136.**

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Fine