

**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: Dora Currea, Co-Chair of the WNC Sanctuary Ministry

DATE: Monday, January 23, 2023

The Washington National Cathedral Sanctuary Ministry provides support and solidarity for our immigrant brothers and sisters. The Ministry was formed in response to resolutions passed by the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church in support of immigrants and calling for meaningful reform of U.S. immigration law, policy, and practice. A key part of this reform calls for incorporating immigrants into our communities and providing them the opportunities to contribute and thrive.

**The Sanctuary Ministry is a group of prayerful advocates who have created a network that serves the 88 parishes of the diocese of Washington covering the District of Columbia and Prince George's County. Our fastest growing parishes, those serving Prince George's County, include migrant communities that would benefit greatly from this legislation. If enacted, it would allow their congregation members to thrive as vital contributing members of our community. For this reason, we strongly support House Bill 0136 as a means of expanding occupational licensure to our immigrant community, of recouping investment in educational opportunities the state has funded, and of equitably serving our increasingly diverse population.**

A member of our Sanctuary Ministry, Ms. Ewaoluwa Ogundana, a DACA beneficiary and graduate student at the University of Maryland at College Park is one example of someone who would be empowered with the proposed legislation. We would like to hold up her eloquent arguments that stand to benefit thousands of others in Maryland:

*Passing this legislation will benefit Maryland in four significant ways:*

- 1. This legislation will alleviate the roadblocks to obtaining professional licenses and encourage more undocumented students to complete their education so that they do not resort to other fields just because those fields do not require licenses. It would be a loss to Maryland's workforce if these students pursue other fields simply because the state bars them from obtaining professional licenses.*
- 2. Almost 40% of Maryland's population hold jobs that require occupational licenses<sup>1</sup>. It is inconsistent to limit specific licenses from undocumented immigrants if the actual*

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). "May 2020 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates," United States Department of Labor.

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*operation of that profession does not require citizenship. With this barrier in place, Maryland is not only limiting thousands of individuals from contributing to a workforce that is in dire need of help, but the state is indirectly also contributing to the community college enrollment decline propagated by the pandemic because these students discontinue their education.<sup>2</sup>*

- 3. Maryland already allows eligible undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates at any state college and university.<sup>3</sup> And since 2019, the state has allowed eligible Maryland students, including those who are undocumented, to attend community college tuition-free under its Community College Promise Scholarship Program.<sup>4</sup> Passing this legislation will be consistent with past comprehensive policies that have helped undocumented immigrants thus far in the state.*
  - 4. Lastly, with [continued] COVID-19 surges and staff shortages in hospitals across the state, this legislation could also bring relief to Maryland's healthcare systems as more immigrants could obtain the necessary licenses to become healthcare professionals and continue the fight against COVID-19.<sup>5</sup>*
- Overall, this legislation would give more undocumented students an incentive to finish their education, integrate into the professional sector, and make fuller contributions towards Maryland's community and economy.*

For these reasons and our profound belief that all should be treated fairly, justly, and respectfully despite their immigration status, **we strongly urge a favorable report on House Bill 0136.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dora Currea, Co-Chair of the WNC Sanctuary Ministry

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<sup>2</sup> National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2021). "Eight Percent Drop in Undergraduate Students Since Fall 2019; Community Colleges Lost 15 Percent of Students in Two Years."

<sup>3</sup> Maryland In-State Tuition Referendum passed in 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Maryland Higher Education Commission Community College Promise Scholarship created in 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Domen, J. (2021). "COVID-19 surge pushes a Maryland health system into 'contingency protocol,'" WTOP News.