

**February 18, 2025**

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Support for Senate Bill 490 – State Boards, Committees, Commissions, Task Forces, and Workgroups – Elimination of Citizenship Requirements and Establishment of Diversity Requirements**

**Dear Chair Feldman and Esteemed Committee Members,**

At Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), we are dedicated to promoting inclusivity, equity, and representation for all communities across our state. Senate Bill 490, which seeks to eliminate citizenship requirements for certain boards and commissions and mandates that these entities reflect the full diversity of Maryland, is a significant step toward ensuring that all residents have a voice in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

By removing outdated citizenship requirements, SB 490 acknowledges the valuable contributions of non-citizen residents who actively participate in and enrich our communities. This inclusive approach not only broadens the pool of qualified candidates for these important roles but also ensures that diverse perspectives are represented, leading to more comprehensive and effective governance. Many individuals who are integral to the social and economic fabric of Maryland are currently excluded from serving on boards and commissions due to citizenship restrictions. SB 490 rectifies this inequity, empowering these community members to contribute their unique insights and experiences to the state's policymaking and advisory bodies.

The enactment of SB 490 will create expanded opportunities for Latino and immigrant communities in several key areas. In education, the inclusion of diverse voices can lead to the development of policies that are more responsive to the needs of all students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. In workforce development, allowing non-citizen professionals to serve will enable boards and commissions to benefit from a wider range of expertise, fostering innovation and economic growth. This legislation actively reduces systemic barriers, promoting a more equitable environment where all residents, regardless of citizenship status, can participate in shaping the future of Maryland.

MLU is committed to amplifying the impact of SB 490 through our ongoing efforts. By collaborating with local organizations, we will work to identify and support qualified individuals from diverse backgrounds for appointments to boards and commissions. Through outreach and advocacy, we will educate our communities about the opportunities available through this legislation and encourage active participation in public service roles. Additionally, we will provide training and resources to prepare community members for effective service on various boards and commissions, ensuring that they are well-equipped to contribute meaningfully.

We urge the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 490. Together, we can build a more inclusive and representative Maryland, where every resident has the opportunity to contribute to our collective success.

**Sincerely,**

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