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Susan O'Neill, Chair

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Testimony in Support of
House Bill 1199 – Physicians - Licensing - Internationally Trained Physicians
House Health and Government Operations Committee
March 10, 2025

The Rural Maryland Council supports House Bill 1199 – Physicians - Licensing - Internationally Trained Physicians. This bill authorizes the State Board of Physicians to issue a medical practice license to internationally trained physicians starting October 1, 2027, under certain conditions. It also requires the Board to establish regulations that outline the minimum qualifications and application fees for licensure, as well as to create a pathway to full licensure.

Rural Marylanders are often in worse health than their urban and suburban counterparts and lack access to medical facilities and practitioners to improve their health. This is especially true in specialty areas such as mental health and dental care. Additionally, rural areas are made up of aging populations that require more medical attention but lack the healthcare workforce to do so. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) reports that more than 1.1 million Marylanders are in a primary care Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). That's over 1.1 million Marylanders who lack access to the primary health care they need. In the U.S., rural or partially rural areas make up over 68% of the designated primary care HPSAs.

As of December 31, 2024, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that to eliminate the federal designations of Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) in Maryland, the state requires 282 primary care practitioners and 81 mental health practitioners. Internationally trained physicians could potentially help address these shortages by providing primary care and mental health services in designated HPSAs, particularly in rural areas of Maryland.

House Bill 1199 will allow more high-level healthcare workers to practice in Maryland where there are shortages or physicians are needed. While certain areas of the State have been facing a shortage of healthcare workers, it was worsened by the pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, members of the healthcare workforce are leaving at higher rates, mostly from the increased workload and amount of stress that they have been facing. As some healthcare workers quit, it creates more of a workload and stress for the remaining members, resulting in a cycle of burnout. This will allow workers to adequately perform their jobs and ensure that patients are getting the treatment that they need.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of House Bill 1199.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county, and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county, and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”