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WOMEN LEGISLATORS OF MARYLAND
THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

February 24, 2025

To: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee

The Maryland Women's Caucus is proud to express our unanimous support for **HB 696: State Boards, Committees, Commissions, Task Forces, and Workgroups – Elimination of Citizenship Requirements and Establishment of Diversity Requirements**. This critical legislation takes an essential step toward ensuring that Maryland's boards and commissions reflect the full diversity of the communities they serve by removing outdated citizenship requirements and fostering greater inclusivity in decision-making spaces.

As you are aware, women—particularly immigrant women—play a vital role in Maryland's economy, education system, and social fabric. However, many are often excluded from leadership and policy-shaping opportunities due to unnecessary barriers like citizenship requirements. **HB 696** ensures that all qualified individuals, regardless of their citizenship status, have the opportunity to contribute their expertise and lived experiences to state boards and commissions. By requiring these bodies to reflect Maryland's full diversity, this bill strengthens representation for women, children, and historically marginalized communities whose voices are often overlooked in policy decisions that directly impact them.

Diversity in leadership leads to better policies, particularly in areas such as education, health care, and economic development—issues that disproportionately affect women and families. When decision-making bodies include representatives who understand the unique challenges faced by immigrant women, mothers, and caregivers, they can craft more equitable and effective policies that support all Marylanders.

For these reasons, the Maryland Women's Caucus strongly urges support for **HB 696**. By passing this legislation, Maryland will take a meaningful step toward creating a more inclusive, representative, and equitable government that truly reflects the strength and diversity of our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your commitment to improving the lives of Marylanders.