



TESTIMONY FOR HB0686
Victims and Witnesses – U Nonimmigrant Status – Certification of Victim Helpfulness

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Solomon

Committee: Judiciary

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB0686 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The U non-immigrant status (U visa) is set aside for victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and are helpful to law enforcement or government officials in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity. This bill broadens the criteria for application to an immigrant victim to include a rebuttable presumption that if the victim's parent, guardian, or next friend, who is assisting in the assistance requested by law enforcement has not refused or failed to provide information to law enforcement the victim's parent, guardian, or next friend is considered helpful.

The bill also reduces the time limit on the agency certifying the U Visa from 90 days to 30 days, and if the immigrant is subject to a deportation order, the time limit is reduced from 14 days to 7 day.

The U non-immigrant visa is an important program that helps correct the underreporting of crimes committed against or witnessed by our immigrant community for fear of compromising their immigration status.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.