



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair
Delegate Sandy J. Bartlett, Vice Chair
Judiciary Committee Members
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus
DATE: February 27, 2025
RE: HB686 – Victims and Witnesses – U Nonimmigrant Status –
Certification of Victim Helpfulness

The MLLC supports HB686 – Victims and Witnesses – U Nonimmigrant Status – Certification of Victim Helpfulness

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB686.

HB686 aims to amend the certification process for U Nonimmigrant Status (U-Visa) applications for victims of qualifying criminal activity. The bill revises the criteria for determining victim helpfulness, establishing a rebuttable presumption that a victim, or their parent, guardian, or next friend, is considered helpful if they have not refused reasonable requests for assistance from law enforcement. It also reduces the timeframe for certifying or denying Form I-918, Supplement B certifications. Additionally, it mandates that certifying entities develop protocols to assist petitioners with limited English proficiency and limits the circumstances under which victim information can be disclosed.

This bill strengthens protections for immigrant victims of crime, many of whom are from Latino communities. The U-Visa program is a critical tool that allows undocumented victims to cooperate with law enforcement without fear of deportation, helping to build trust between immigrant communities and the justice system. By streamlining the certification process, reducing wait times, and ensuring language accessibility, the bill removes barriers that have historically prevented Latino victims from obtaining legal relief.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB686.