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The Honorable Members of the House Committee

Maryland General Assembly

Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Testimony in Support of HB0686 – U Visa Certification Process Enhancement Act

Dear Chairperson and Committee Members

I am writing to express my strong support for HB0686, which aims to improve the U Visa certification process, ensuring that immigrant victims of crime receive timely and fair access to justice. As an immigrant and advocate for my community, I have witnessed the fear and uncertainty that many victims face when deciding whether to report crimes, particularly due to concerns about their immigration status and the bureaucratic obstacles involved.

The U visa program is a critical tool for promoting public safety by encouraging immigrant victims to cooperate with law enforcement without fear of deportation. However, many individuals experience unnecessary delays and inconsistencies in the certification process. HB0686 seeks to eliminate these challenges by:

- Establishing a **presumption of helpfulness** for victims who cooperate with law enforcement.
- Implementing **clear timelines** for certification responses to prevent unnecessary delays.
- Requiring **language assistance** for petitioners with limited English proficiency, ensuring equitable access to the process.

By passing this bill, Maryland will take an essential step in ensuring that crime victims are protected, regardless of their immigration status. HB0686 will build stronger trust between immigrant communities and law enforcement while reinforcing the state's commitment to justice and public safety.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB0686 and support its mission to provide critical protections to immigrant crime victims. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Maureen Wambui