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To: Members of House Judiciary Committee

From: Immigration Law Section Council

Date: February 27, 2025

Subject: **Bill HB686** – Victims and Witnesses – U Nonimmigrant Status – Certification of Victim Helpfulness

Position: **Support**

Good Afternoon, Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett and Members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Sheri Hoidra. I am here today on behalf of the Maryland State Bar Association Immigration Law Section, which officially supports HB 686. Our section is comprised of hundreds of private attorneys, judges and immigration officials who are members of our association.

I am an attorney practicing in the Maryland Bar for more than 12 years. My office is in Baltimore County and I reside in Howard County. I practice primarily in immigration law matters. I am the Chair of the Section Council of the Maryland State Bar Association Immigration Law Section. I have presented seminars to attorneys through venues such as the Maryland State Bar Association, the Maryland Association for Justice and the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

The Immigration Law Section Council supports this bill without amendment. This bill creates an important rebuttable presumption of victim helpfulness in the detection, investigation or prosecution of qualifying criminal activity if there has not been a refusal or failure to provide information and assistance reasonably requested by law enforcement authorities.

The bill also reduces the time for law enforcement certification from 90 days to 30 days after receiving a request for such certification. For victims in federal removal, exclusion, or deportation proceedings, or subject to a final order related thereto, certification is reduced from 14 days to 7 days after receiving a request. These provisions will greatly assist victims of crime who need faster law enforcement responses to be able to seek timely federal protection.

Finally, the bill will require that Maryland law enforcement develop protocols to assist those with limited English proficiency to pursue these important protections.

The Immigration Law Section Council of the Maryland Bar Association supports HB 686 and respectfully requests this Committee to vote favorably on the bill without amendment.

END OF TESTIMONY