



TESTIMONY FOR HB0579 Criminal Procedure – U Nonimmigrant Status Petitions

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Embry

Committee: Judiciary

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB0579 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 makes several changes to the process of qualifying for a U visa

- If the person requesting the U visa is a victim of more than one crime that qualifies for certification, each crime should be listed on the certification
- The person requesting the visa is considered to be helpful if they have not refused to cooperate or failed to provide information reasonably requested by a certifying entity
- There is no statute of limitations on when a qualifying crime occurred
- The certification only provides factual evidence but does not determine eligibility for the visa

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. This bill clarifies the process so that it is clearer to both the applicants and the persons certifying.

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