



Committee on Migration

c/o Migration and Refugee Services, USCCB

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September 14, 2020

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration (USCCB/COM), I urge you to cosponsor HR 8046, the *Improving Opportunities for New Americans Act*, introduced by Representative John Katko (NY) and sponsored by Representative Ben McAdam (UT). This bipartisan measure would direct the U.S. Secretary of Labor, in collaboration with other federal and nongovernmental agencies, to conduct a study of the factors that affect the ability of immigrants and refugees who have professional credentials that were obtained outside the United States to work in those professions while living in the United States.

For Catholics, work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continued participation in God's Creation. "The Lord blesses our work so that we may share its fruits with others" (Deuteronomy 14: 28-29). We are supportive of this bill that would help us to explore how immigrants and refugees in our midst might better use the gifts of their professional expertise, higher education, and skills for themselves, their families, and communities throughout the United States.

HR 8046 would direct the U.S. Department of Labor to review the U.S. employment of applicable immigrants and refugees. It would concentrate on persons who have been lawfully present residents or naturalized U.S. citizens during the last five years. The study would compare the work these professionals performed before they emigrated to the United States with the work that they have performed since migrating to United States. In addition to would identify any professional credentials they possessed before emigrating and assessing barriers that keep them from pursuing comparable professional level employment in the United States. It also would identify current governmental and nongovernmental resources that help these newcomers overcome such barriers. Finally, the study would contain policy recommendations to address such barriers.

Nearly 2 million immigrants and refugees with college degrees are [reportedly](#) either employed in low-skilled jobs or unemployed. This means that many individuals are not being able to use all their education and God-given abilities. Under-employment of this kind leads to \$10 billion in lost taxes at the federal, state, and local levels and over \$39 billion in lost revenue for immigrant and refugee communities. Also of great concern, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, is that over [263,000 immigrants and refugees](#) with undergraduate degrees in healthcare, over half of which are in nursing, have been either under-utilized or unemployed. A [recent study](#) found that there is a severe shortfall in 15 health care occupations in the United States, including 14 frontline health care professions. We need to utilize all available essential workers to help ensure a robust response to COVID-19.

In our work with immigrants and refugees and their families, we note the great economic, cultural, civic, and religious contributions they bring to our communities and our country. As a faith that values the dignity of work and the ability to provide for one's family, we welcome efforts that help further that endeavor. We respectfully urge you to join us in supporting this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mario E. Dorsonville". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a stylized "D".

Most Rev. Mario E. Dorsonville
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration