



State of Vermont
Office of the Secretary of State
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Sarah Copeland Hanzas, Secretary of State
S. Lauren Hibbert, Deputy Secretary
Kevin A. Rushing, Director

March 28, 2024

To: Sen. Ruth Hardy , Chair
Senate Committee on Government Operations

From: S. Lauren Hibbert, Deputy Secretary of State
Lauren Layman, General Counsel, Office of Professional Regulation

Re: H. 606 – An Act Relating to Professional Licensure and Immigration Status

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about H. 606, an act relating to professional licensure and immigration status.

The Secretary of State and the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) are very supportive of this bill and its purposes. We have worked throughout the years to reduce barriers for people who obtained professional qualifications in other countries and to provide guidance on how to get professional licenses here in Vermont. H. 606 would be an excellent addition to and facilitator of our State's efforts to help all qualified people work in their chosen profession or occupation.

OPR supports the version of H. 606 that the House adopted. This version allows OPR to continue to ask for social security numbers even though such numbers would not be required for licensure in most cases. A social security number is still the best way OPR has for identifying licensees, which is essential for enforcement and public protection. Having an effective and efficient means of identifying licensees is particularly important as the State adopts more interstate occupational licensing compacts and it becomes more challenging to identify the "Jane Smith" charged with unprofessional conduct out of all the "Jane Smiths" in a compact profession who may have practiced in Vermont. That said, OPR fully supports providing applicants without a social security number an alternative identification number with which to obtain a professional license. H. 606 provides this option by allowing applicants to use a federal employer identification number of an individual taxpayer identification number instead of a social security number.

Additionally, OPR supports the exception in the current version of H. 606 requiring an applicant to provide a social security number if the number is required under federal law or for an interstate compact license. The exception is necessary because many of the compacts adopted by Vermont require applicants to provide a social security number. Additionally, some federal laws require a social security number before a state may grant a license in a particular field. OPR appreciates the inclusion of an exception in H. 606 that facilitates continued compliance with these compact and federal law obligations.

H. 606 is an excellent proposal that OPR supports fully. We thank you for the opportunity to testify on the bill and look forward to helping in any way we can going forward.]