

Testimony of Dr. Aziz Jami

Dear Delegates of the Virginia House Health and Human Services Subcommittee on Health Professions. Thank you for giving me the chance to join your committee meeting. It is an honor for me to speak in support of House Bill 995.

I am Dr. Aziz Jami. I have over 20 years of clinical experience as a general surgery specialist and am a long-time professor at Herat Medical University. I successfully completed a fellowship in laparoscopic surgery from Germany and brought the specialized skills I learned back to teaching in Herat Province and Afghanistan.

I was evacuated from Afghanistan in August 2021 and have sought to establish a new life in Virginia alongside my wife who specializes in obstetrics and gynecology. Since 2021, we both have applied to countless clinics and health service providers. We have applied through job fairs and networks of friends and medical professionals. . It has been so disheartening to be unable to use our education and expertise especially knowing that healthcare shortages exist in Virginia and among other recent Afghan arrivals. Although we have medical skills, language and culture, we are unable but eager to be of help in our new home communities.

To subsist and be able to pay our bills and support my family, I took a non-medical position with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services.

But my dream remains to get my medical license in my new home and serve our community. Unfortunately, during the last two years I heard from hundreds of overseas doctors who passed the USMLE and were applying for residency but not matching for 2-3 consecutive years. The residency barrier is especially discouraging and dissuades me and many other overseas medical graduates from even pursuing the USMLE which needs a significant investment of time and funds.

But I am not ready to give up and I am eager to be a doctor again, helping people in my new home of Virginia. I will continue in my personal and team efforts to advocate for the next generation.

I joined the Refugee Physicians Advocacy coalition and strongly support HB995 because this legislation can create a pathway for overseas doctors to return to medical practice where no path currently exists. I dream of the day when this bill becomes law and this opportunity becomes a reality for doctors like my wife and me and so many others.

I really appreciate your consideration and count on your support for HB995.