

Dear Senators,

My name is Win Mar lar Kyin, the Health Services Manager at Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO). I started my position on 08/01/2022.

I am a refugee from Myanmar, Southeast Asian Country. I have been in the United States for one year. I was a medical graduate from my country. I graduated from the University of Medicine, Magway in 2008 and I also got the Master of Public Health degree in 2014 from the University of Public Health (UOPH), Yangon, Myanmar. Since after graduation from medical university, I worked as an Assistant Surgeon in public hospitals and department of medical services, Myanmar for 12 years since 2009. My last position in my country was Assistant Director in the Ministry of Health and Sports.

When the Military took over the civilian government on 02/01/2021, I was involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) to peacefully protest the Military Dictatorship. Then, eighteen days after the coup on 02/18/2021, the security forces from the Military came to my house and tried to abduct me. I narrowly escaped due to the help of my good neighbors and finally I unexpectedly became a refugee who had to resettle in the US. I arrived in the US on 01/12/2022. Portland is my first place to settle in the US.

After one and half months of my arrival to Portland, I started working at Walgreens on 03/01/2022 as a Pharmacy Technician, entry level job in healthcare field. It is a challenging journey to re-start my personal and professional life in a new environment.

To become a medical doctor here, the international medical graduates (IMG) have to take the USMLE (United States Medical License Examination). The IMGs need to reach out to the prior medical universities to submit the official educational documents for verification to be able to take the USMLE. It is impossible to request the medical university of my country to issue the official transcripts for refugees and immigrants like me because the current de facto Military government strongly prohibits it to block our career development. If there is alternative verification pathway and any supportive programs for us to be able to sit for the USMLE, it would be very helpful for individual's professional development and to fulfill the human resource gaps in the US healthcare system.

There are many professionals including medical graduates, nurses, teachers, engineers, social workers who had to flee the country due to the persecution of Myanmar Military after 2021. For another example, my younger brother, a Pathologist with Ph.D degree, is also now in Thailand as a refugee and he is waiting for the approval from the US government to accept his application for Refugee Admission Program (USRAP). He wants to take the USMLE but the requirement to submit the official documents directly from the previous medical university is the huge challenge to continue his career. This is the real obstacles for every medical graduate from Myanmar because of the country's political situation and the suppression of the medical professions by the Military Government.

Therefore, I relinquished my dream to become a medical doctor in the US, but I tried to reach out to the World Education Services (WES) to request the Credential Evaluation to apply for the Healthcare MBA program at OHSU. The WES has the gateway program for the applicants who are from the politically unstable countries but unfortunately, Myanmar is not in this list. Finally, after sending out the several appeal letters to WES, they provided the Credential Evaluation for my medical degree and Master of Public Health transcripts. Currently, I am attending the Healthcare MBA program at OHSU starting from September 2022.

During my stay in Thailand as a refugee in 2021 November, I had another sad story about losing the opportunity to apply for the refugee scholarship program. The John Hopkins University called for the applications of refugee scholarship (Master of Public Health, MPH) especially for the selected countries which are unstable due to civil war or other political conditions including Myanmar. But, due to the political barrier to send out the official educational documents directly to the John Hopkins University from my prior universities, I wrote an appeal letter to the program director of the MPH program. Even though I am an official refugee approved by the US government at that time, the program director denied my appeal letter and I did not even get the opportunity to apply for it even though the scholarship is specifically for the refugees. This experience made me depressed, and it affected my physical and mental health at that time. This experience raises many doubts and questions about the refugee scholarship eligibility, verification, and selection process.

I would like to request the government officials and selected legislators to kindly support the immigrants and refugees to be able to continue their previous career by minimizing the barriers and by creating the accessible channels and pathway. The immigrants could be the ones who have the background knowledge and experiences to apply in the US by following the respective policies and quality control guidelines to maintain and improve their professional skills and conducts.

I appreciate your time and consideration about the professional credentialing program which is a glimpse of hope for us who are passionate about working as medical professionals to serve the community and the United States which protects us to survive from the threats of Military. We are the minority population in the US but our contribution to the State economy and to the health system is growing as we work hard by facing several challenges.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Win M Kyin