



Annapolis Immigration Justice Network

Walking Alongside Our Immigrant Neighbors

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 0015
Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

TO: Chairwoman McIntosh, Vice Chairman Chang, and members of the
Appropriations Committee

FROM: Suzanne Martin

My name is Suzanne Martin and I have lived in Annapolis, Maryland for 17 years in District #30A. I am the founder and President of the Annapolis Immigration Justice Network (AIJN), a grass roots, all volunteer organization serving residents of Anne Arundel County. I share this testimony on behalf of the Annapolis Immigration Justice Network.

Our non-profit organization formed in 2017 and over that time, AIJN has served over 300 residents in Anne Arundel County. Since mid 2018, we have provided financial assistance totaling over \$180,000 in legal fees. AIJN has served non-detained as well as detained immigrants. In addition to financial assistance, we also have a case management team that has helped people in pro se situations to fill out asylum applications, work permit applications, and any other paperwork needed as part of their immigration process. Through my work over the last few years, I strongly support HB0015. I believe our state would greatly benefit from establishing the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. The Governor's Office should create a network of neighborhood-based centers providing immigrant services. This would help to serve those in our community who need help navigating the process here - not just in terms of assisting them with certain matters but also in connecting them to services. I believe setting up this office would send a signal to the immigrant communities in Maryland that we value their voice and we want to connect with them.

Their voice is so important as the immigrant community has made such critical contributions to our state - through their talents, their hard work, their dedication and their resolve.

As a resident of Anne Arundel County, I have spent the last 4 years dedicated to helping our clients obtain legal representation for their immigration cases. I fully support an Office of Immigrant Affairs in the Governor's Office. Making connections with our immigrant community not only benefits the Citizens of the State of Maryland but it also impacts the well-being of our entire state. For all of these reasons, I ask you to reach a favorable report on HB0015.