



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 1188

Maryland Protecting Opportunities and Regional Trade (PORT) Act

Finance Committee

April 2, 2024

Dear Honorable Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee,

The tragic incident on March 26, 2024, has had a profound impact on the CASA community, on Baltimore, our state - and across the nation. It is with a heavy heart that we mourn the loss of CASA members, Miguel Luna and Maynor Yassir Suazo Sandoval. And the loss of Alejandro Hernandez Fuentes, Dorlian Ronial Castillo Cabrera, Jose Mynor Lopez, and Carlos Hernandez. These Marylanders, from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, are immigrants who made Maryland stronger. We honor and celebrate them, all of the port workers impacted, as heroes who worked tirelessly to build and sustain our nation. **CASA offers favorable testimony in strong support of SB 1188, Maryland Protecting Opportunities and Regional Trade (PORT) Act.** This bill would ensure that adequate measures are taken to assist those affected by the Francis Scott Key bridge collapse.

As the foremost immigrant services and advocacy organization in the region, CASA is deeply committed to the welfare of all immigrant families and the workers impacted by this disaster. The loss is immeasurable, particularly for the six families who have lost their loved ones, a void that can never be filled. In these trying times, it is imperative that we extend our support and resources to all affected individuals, ensuring that no one is left behind due to their immigration status. The tragedy has starkly highlighted the vital role immigrant labor plays in sustaining Maryland's economy, providing essential services, from healthcare to construction.

CASA understands the Moore Administration has proposed amendments aimed at extending scholarship benefits to the spouses and children of those who perished. We wholeheartedly support these initiatives and urge the committee to consider them favorably.

CASA thanks the General Assembly for their swift and decisive legislative action. We urge a favorable report on SB 1188 to bring much-needed relief to those whose lives have been changed by this tragedy.