

SB 317 – SUPPORT
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Office of the Attorney General – Right to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Coordinator
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 27, 2021

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Nana Sarpong and I am a resident of Beltsville, Maryland. As a former client of Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition. I am writing to express my support for SB 317: Office of the Attorney General – Right to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Coordinator.

I have one son; he is four. I am married and have been for 6-7 years. Both my wife and my son are US citizens. I work as a contractor. I am from Ghana, but I have lived in the U.S. for eleven years.

I was detained by ICE in June 11, 2018. I was held for a little over a month. It was very hard. I will never be able to forget this experience. My wife was working so much. I was the one staying at home to raise our son who was only two. She was having to cut back on hours to take care of our son while I was detained. This impacted us economically. I felt like it was an injustice. I wasn't trying to run from ICE.

Before I had a lawyer, I was locked up and couldn't handle things on my own. I was struggling to find a lawyer. CAIR Coalition reached out to me and told me they would take my case for free. Having a lawyer helped so much. My lawyer sat with me and discussed my whole situation with me. Just the way she talked to me, made me feel like she was listening to me. She made me know what my rights were. Considering what I was seeing, people being deported and separated from their families over night, I do not know what would have happened to me. I met so many other people in the detention center who were lost and hopeless because they did not have a lawyer. It did not feel right.

For what happened to me and what I have seen, this bill is so important because there are so many people in our community who need this bill. I saw so many stories of people who were being separated from their families. I met people who were young and had spent their whole life in the U.S., people who had no one at their country, people who were afraid to be killed. People like them and me need a right to lawyer who will tell us what our rights are and make sure that we are not take advantage of.

I urge a favorable report on SB 317.