

SB 317 – SUPPORT
Josue Zorto Chirinos
571-835-1655

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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 a Josue Zorto Chirinos and I am a resident of Hyattsville, 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 came to the United States in 2004. I am from Honduras. I have three children ages 11, 16, and 18. My two youngest children are U.S. Citizens. I work in a recycling center.

I left Honduras because I was fleeing for my life. There had been an attempt on my life, so my ex-wife and I fled with our daughter.

I was detained by ICE in September of 2018. I was held for 6 months. Being alone, separated from your family, is very hard. Without my attorney, this experience would have been terrible. Without my attorney, I would not have won my case. I was a few days away from being deported when CAIR Coalition reached out me offering free representation. Not having defense in court is so detrimental.

I believe that this law is very important because a lot of injustices would be left unheard without this bill. Families would be left separated. Free counsel is so important. People in detention often don't have the resources to pay for an attorney. The attorney helps the detained person defend themselves and tell their stories.

I will always be thankful to, first of all, God, and then to my attorney, but also to the people of Prince George's County for helping me. Please listen to the importance of this bill, because there are many families in Maryland that are facing separation and other terrible outcomes without your help.

I urge a favorable report on SB 317.