



January 22, 2021

Honorable Senator William C. Smith, Jr.  
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of SB317 – Office of The Attorney General- Right to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Coordinator**

Dear Chair William C. Smith, Jr. and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 317 entitled Office of the Attorney General - Right to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Coordinator. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

The United States' immigration detention program, operated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), is the largest of its kind in the world. The majority of Individuals detained by ICE are not afforded the right to legal counsel for their proceedings. This is a violation of basic civil liberties; all ICE detainees should be afforded due process to ensure fair, impartial treatment.

Oftentimes, detainees do not understand the complex intricacies of our justice system. Their judgment and ability to articulate their circumstances can be inhibited by language and cultural barriers, stress, circumstances, fear. This bill will ensure, whatever their personal predicament and response, that they can speak to a lawyer who is familiar with their case. It also aims to educate minorities who have been directly affected by detention on their legal rights.

The bill fixes critical oversights, and will seek to provide individuals with legal counsel when necessary and requested. We support this bill because it seeks to provide basic rights, and we believe it will help level the playing field for immigrants and communities of color who have been disproportionately harmed by cruel and inhumane immigration policies in our country. Therefore, we respectfully urge your vote in favor of it. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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