

**Karen Mejia, Resident of Riverdale, Prince George's County**

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB317**

Office of the Attorney General - Right to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Coordinator  
Judicial Proceedings Committee

January 27, 2021

Dear Honorable Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee,

My name is Karen Mejia. I am asking, on behalf of my brother who can not be here, for your support on SB317. He can not be here to testify in support of this bill because he was deported in August last year.

My brother was detained in the Howard County detention center for several months before getting deported. He endured horrible conditions like not receiving the necessary food and medical care in a center where immigrants were treated as the worst. My brother was robbed of his freedom and humanity during his last months in this country.

During COVID-19, so many people, including our family, have suffered financially. We could not afford a lawyer to fight his case. If we had a lawyer, my brother might still be here with me today. He would have been able to spend Thanksgiving with us. I always cook him chicken since he doesn't like turkey. He would have been able to spend Christmas with us. He would have been able to see and celebrate the birthday of his beautiful daughter who turned eight years old a weeks ago. The holidays have been so hard. Everyday has been tough. I miss him so much these days.

I miss my brother. He was one of the few family members that I have in this country. No one deserves to be locked up in a cell simply for being an immigrant and no one deserves to have to face deportation without a lawyer.

Please support and fight with your soul this year to pass SB317 so that people like my brother aren't deported because they cannot afford a lawyer.