



HB750

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Latino Racial Justice Circle
RE: Right to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Coordinator (“Universal Representation”)

POSITION: SUPPORT

Founded in October 2015, the Latino Racial Justice Circle (LRJC) is a faith-based group of volunteers that seeks to create cross-cultural faith-based communities that work to eliminate racial injustice and discrimination against immigrants. Currently, we have about twenty active members who are residents of Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

Since our founding, the LRJC has been committed to helping immigrant families in Baltimore to obtain legal representation in immigration courts. Too many families are torn apart by deportation because they are unable to afford adequate legal representation. No child should fear being separated from their parent because their family is not able to afford legal counsel. The non-profit organizations in Maryland that assist immigrants in legal proceedings are overwhelmed with immigrant families that are hard-working members of our communities and need help. Groups like ours cannot meet the many immigrant families' demands that face separation because one member is facing removal proceedings.

Research shows that detained immigrants are 11 times more likely to pursue immigration relief when they have legal counsel and twice as likely to obtain relief as detained immigrants without counsel. A fair judgement should not be a privilege of those who can afford an attorney. Legal representation is even more critical for children and other vulnerable populations. We ask that immigrants in detention be allowed to have their day in court. We urge you to support HB750.