

CHESAPEAKE PSR

PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

HB 750 – Office of the Attorney General - Right to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Coordinator - SUPPORT

The Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) is the state affiliate of the national Physicians for Social Responsibility, part of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985. CPSR is a statewide organization of over 700 e-activist physicians, health professions and other supporters which relies on sound, evidenced based public health policy principally regarding prevention of nuclear war and strategies to mitigate climate crisis all through the lens of racial equity and social justice exposed by the pandemic.

[One study of parental detention](#) reported behavioral consequences in children, job and income loss for the family, increased housing instability, and food “hardship.” [Another study](#) found fear of deportation was associated with increased weight gain and blood pressure readings. Studies have demonstrated that such detentions, whether of adults, adolescents or children, are associated with high levels of [anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder](#) which too often persists after the detention has ended.

Human Rights Watch documented 138 murders, just in El Salvador, of people deported from the United States between 2013 and 2020 and over 70 instances in which deportees were subjected to sexual violence, torture, and other harm. The authors believed these were undercounts of the true number of cases. The victims are not just those who are tortured, raped and murdered, but all of the family members and friends in the US who find out about the crimes and are in mortal fear of their own deportation.

A [report from Syracuse University](#), reported on cases during the time of the Obama Administration, found that *when children had representation, they were able to stay in the US 73% of the times vs 15% of the time when there was no representation.* [The American Immigration Counsel similarly reported on the importance of counsel in immigration deportation](#) proceedings: “Among detained immigrants, those with representation were twice as likely as unrepresented immigrants to obtain immigration relief if they sought it (49 percent with counsel versus 23 percent without). Represented immigrants who were never detained were nearly five times more likely than their unrepresented counterparts to obtain relief if they sought it (63 percent with counsel versus 13 percent without.” These numbers were collected for the period between 2007-2012.

The detention of immigrants for civil immigration violations during a pandemic is especially unconscionable where being placed in congregate settings, often without proper PPE and distancing that puts them at especially high risk of contracting the SARS-2 coronavirus. A report from Physicians for Human Rights and Harvard Medical School, detailed evidence for cases [escalating more rapidly](#) inside detention centers compared with the US population. Another report detailed how deaths under ICE detention increased 7-fold between 2019 and 2020 and over half were from causes that were [preventable and related to being detained](#)

(influenza, COVID-19, and suicide). With racial disparities documented so far in the Maryland roll-out of vaccines, there is no reason to believe that those incarcerated for civil immigration violations will be protected by vaccination from COVID-19 any time soon.

Deportation can be deadly for those deported and create fear and illness in vulnerable immigrant populations left behind. Right to counsel leads to better outcomes for those at risk of deportation and their loved ones. Since morbidity and mortality are reduced when immigrants have right to counsel in deportation proceedings, CPSR supports HB750.

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