

SB 129– FAVORABLE
Marvin Dubon

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"Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program"
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 3, 2022

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Marvin and I am a resident of Baltimore, Maryland. As a former client of Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition, I am writing to express my support for SB 129: **"Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program."**

I was born in El Salvador. I fled the violence in my country and threats from criminal organizations. I've lived in the United States for 12 years. I have a son who is 14 years old. I'm married and I work as a painter. I work many hours, usually shifts at night as well.

I was detained by ICE for 11 months. It was a terrible experience. It hurt to be separated from my son. It was also very difficult for my wife. I am her only financial support and she is very dependent on me because of her medical condition. She's very sick and can't work. It hurt that I couldn't be with my family for almost a year, especially since it was during COVID and we couldn't see each other. I was afraid I'd be deported any day and separated from my family.

When I started my immigration case, I didn't know what was going on. The first time I went before the judge, I went alone. It was hard for me to express myself and talk to the judge. A month later, I qualified for free legal representation under the Baltimore Safe Cities program. When I had my hearing, my lawyer defended me before the judge; she knew what to say and what to do. I also now understood the laws and how they applied to me. The lawyer helped me tell my story. I was able to fight for my case and my lawyer made me feel like I wasn't alone. Without a lawyer, I know that I would have been deported.

Having someone defend you in front of the judge is very important. Individuals should not be separated from their families because they do not have access to an attorney. I ask that you pass this law.

I urge a favorable report on SB 129.