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THINK JEWISHLY. ACT LOCALLY.

TESTIMONY ON SBI29/HBI14 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstricher, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Tiffen Lovler Tapia, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

My name is Tiffen Lovler Tapia. I live in Baltimore City in District 46. I am submitting this testimony in support of SBI29/HBI14, Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program, on behalf of Jews United for Justice. Jews United for Justice organizes 6,000 Jews and allies from across Maryland in support of local social, racial, and economic justice campaigns.

As a Jewish person, I know that our story is of immigrating to new areas and welcoming strangers to our own homes. The Torah lessons to behave with care, equity, and love toward the stranger appear 36 times in the Torah; it is the most-repeated command in the entire Torah. I take those lessons to heart. It is important that we make sure that those of us who were not born in our community are as safe as those of us who were.

I am here because my great-grandparents immigrated to the United States during World War I, escaping the battlefields and pogroms for safety and a chance at prosperity. Many immigrants today are also escaping the hardships of their homelands for a better home, but they don't arrive to open arms the way my family did. My great-grandparents were lucky - they came here before the United States instituted restrictive immigration laws that prevent so many immigrants from entering with an easy path to citizenship today.

I can see the richness and beauty that immigration brings right here in the city of Baltimore and in my neighborhood of Highlandtown. Highlandtown has been a neighborhood of immigrants since 1866 and it continues to this day. The first settlers were primarily German Americans, who then welcomed Eastern and Southern European immigrants in the 20th century and are now being augmented by a growing Latinx population. I love seeing all of this happen in my neighborhood. I enjoy talking with my neighbors in Spanish, I enjoy going to the various cultural festivals in Patterson Park to taste all the cuisines and to learn more about my neighbors, and I am enthralled by the performances in the local theaters. I appreciate this about my neighborhood and about the United States.

Immigrants bring unique ways of thinking and help us solve our nation's problems. They share their culture with us to make us a better country. The American story is full of immigrants who helped us achieve great scientific goals, expanded our libraries with their writings, filled our

symphony halls with their music and dancing, and inspired new culinary arts with their cooking. But our country also has a history of persecuting newly arrived immigrants and turning away those in need of safe harbor. The least we can do is provide our neighbors with due process by ensuring that Maryland residents have legal counsel should they be detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The federal immigration system is deeply unfair and has many systemic problems that we have not addressed. But we are able to do something here in Maryland for our residents. That is why I am supportive of SB129. This legislation will help Maryland's immigrants get the legal help they need to have a fair chance in the courts. This legislation will ensure that all Maryland immigrants who are detained by ICE have access to government-appointed counsel. Everyone deserves due process.

On behalf of Jews United for Justice, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB129.