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**Testimony in Support of SB.0129
Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program**

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: David Sieradzki

My name is David Sieradzki. I am a resident of District 16 (Bethesda) and am submitting this testimony in support of SB.0129.

I am the son of a legal immigrant who arrived in the United States after surviving the hell of the Holocaust and being rescued at the end of the war by the United States Army. He was naturalized and became a proud American citizen, and I'm so grateful that he did! If he had been detained and faced deportation proceedings, he definitely could not have been able to afford a lawyer and he probably wouldn't have been able to navigate those proceedings. I doubt my father would have managed to stay in this country, even though there was no reason to deny him that opportunity. And I probably would never have been able to participate in our beautiful democracy by submitting this testimony.

I'm writing to urge you to support the establishment of the Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program. People who arrive here in Maryland and need legal assistance with immigration proceedings are not "*them*" – they're "*us*." Not "aliens"; human beings – neighbors, parents, brothers, sisters – who might face the grave risk of deportation and need help dealing with the complicated and potentially dangerous immigration system. We need to make sure that our government treats all of us fairly, including those among us who are most vulnerable. Passing this bill to create a new Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program will help make Maryland more just and more compassionate by ensuring that residents of our state get the legal representation they need in the immigration process.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable vote on SB.0129.