

SB 129– FAVORABLE
Patricia B.

SB 129– FAVORABLE
"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 Patricia B. and I am a resident of Baltimore, Maryland. As the wife of 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."**

My husband, Marvin, was detained by ICE for almost a year in 2018. My husband and I have lived together for six years in Maryland. We attend a church in Baltimore. My husband works as a painter. I cannot work because of my health condition. I was treated for TB and meningitis and so I was left with a bad foot and a weak heart. I am also being treated for an end stage kidney disease. I undergo dialysis almost every day.

My husband was detained by ICE in July of 2018. That was a terrible time in my life. My life was so unstable. I was very sick at that time, and he was the only person who supported me. When he was detained, I felt like the world came down on me. I was so afraid that he would be returned to El Salvador and I would be left here alone. His son suffered so much during that time. He was always crying and sad, it was a very hard time for him too.

A friend of my husband's got him the phone number for CAIR. Thanks to God, we were able to get free representation. Our lawyer worked so hard on our case. When you have a lawyer in immigration proceedings, ICE pays more attention to you. They treat you and your case with a little more respect. The lawyer kept me up to date on how my husband's case was going; she showed me how I could help him. To this day, she still is on our side, defending us.

Without an attorney, my husband would have been deported. The judge would not have known how important it was for him to stay. They would not have had an understanding of our lives.

This bill is a necessity. It is a bill to keep families together. When he was detained, I searched so much for a lawyer. They would tell me ridiculous prices, that I could not afford. This bill will keep families together and give people new opportunities to keep their families safe.

I urge a favorable report on SB 129.