

Maria Rodesno

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB0129/HB0114

Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program
Judicial Proceedings Committee / Judiciary Committee

January 31, 2022

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Members of the Committee,

My name is Maria Rodesno and I have lived in this country since 2014. I am writing this letter to testify in support of this important bill, Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings.

On June 19, 2018, my husband was detained by ICE agents while he was on his way to work. I found out because my brother-in-law called me on the phone and told me that my husband did not reach him. They usually went to work together every day. Then became hours of anguish because I began to walk down the street and that's when I found his car parked sitting there with the food that I prepared for him and everything.

I called the police and they told me that they were not holding him. I searched with immigration and learned that he was detained. At this time, I had the support of CASA, whom I thank. I had to get a lawyer, but it was very difficult because I had to borrow money and work night and day to pay it. It took us more than two years before we finished paying the attorney.

My husband was detained for 10 months. They were very sad times for our family. My 3, 7, 11, 17 and 19-year-old daughters were always crying. There were days we went to see him in jail and they wouldn't let us see him. We saw him in court and they wouldn't let us touch each other, hug each other. It was very hard for him and for us.

We had the blessing of God that he stayed here, but I know many people who did not have the money or the information to stop getting deported. ICE destroyed families. I ask that you pass this law to prevent more families from being divided. Having access to representation when you are detained means that people stand a chance at staying here. Without a lawyer, it is almost impossible to win your case.

My family and I are here because of the violence in Honduras. My family and I cannot return to our country because that would be death. I was able to get a lawyer, but many people in detention do not have lawyers to help them. They are in detention without committing any violent crime, without money for a lawyer, while the county makes money off of them. It's wrong.

Please pass Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings, HB0114.

Maria Rodesno

