

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 Fausto 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 Guatemala. I came to this when I was 19 years-old. I fled from my country because my family was heavily involved in politics. We were accused and ostracized. We were discriminated.

I am married and have one son who is three years old. He is a U.S. citizen. I go to a Christian church in Baltimore.

I was detained by ICE in November of 2019. I was separated from my young son. It was very difficult for my family. I was the one who supported our household. My wife had to financially support us and raise our son. Being in detention was something that was very difficult. I speak Spanish and did not know what was happening. I just assumed I was going to be deported.

While I was in detention, someone told me about CAIR Coalition and I was able to contact them and get help from an attorney. It is something very helpful. She helped me understand everything that was going on. She coordinated with my wife and family and helped them understand my case as well. Without her help, I would not be able to be in this country. I am so thankful for my attorney. She fought very hard for me and my family. I was filled with so much joy when I was reunited with my wife and my son. It is something that I cannot describe in words. Now I can work on our lives and our future.

I think this bill is very important. Often, we struggle financially. It can be very expensive. This help is incredible. This can mean the difference for so many people. There are so many more people who need help.

Due to my experience in detention, and how much my situation changed when I had a lawyer, I urge a favorable report on SB 129.