

SB 129– FAVORABLE
Jose Amaya

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"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 Jose and I am a resident of Hyattsville, 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 work in construction and I have two children. I have lived in Maryland for 8 years.

I was held by ICE in a detention center for 6 months. It was a very difficult experience for me. I couldn't be with my kids and do my job as a father and protect them. I couldn't afford a lawyer because I had to use the little money I had to support my kids. I didn't understand what was going on with my case, and I thought I was going to be deported. I had given up hope.

Thankfully, I received free legal representation with Prince George's ISLA program. My lawyer showed me how the laws protected me and I was able to fight my case. I won and was reunited with my family.

The immigration system is set to deport people. Without a lawyer, a detainee will be deported because they do not understand the laws. In detention, they treat you like you're nothing and it's impossible to understand your case. It's not fair for people to be separated from their families because they can't afford a lawyer.

I am very grateful that I can work for a better future for my children. I wish all immigrants detained in Maryland had the same opportunity. Thank you.

I urge a favorable report on SB 129.