



HB 114 | SB 129
Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program
Favorable

February 3, 2022

Good afternoon Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher,

My name is Teresa Woorman and I live in Bethesda, MD. I am delivering this testimony as Vice President of the Montgomery County Young Democrats (MCYD) in favor of SB 129. Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program. MCYD is an organization of young people ages 14-35 that offers a voice for young people who seek progressive change in order to secure a just and stable future for all Montgomery County residents.

This legislature has made progress in recent years making Maryland a more just place for our immigrant families. This bill would provide low-income Marylanders in immigration detention access to state-funded representation to ensure that detained immigrants and their families understand their rights and are supported in a holistic way. The bill would assign the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MILSC) to coordinate the funding of legal services of the program.

The Supreme Court has affirmed that the right to an attorney is meant to protect people from unfair trials and also means providing an effective lawyer. Immigrants in the US are currently only entitled to legal representation provided by the government in very limited situations. This leaves most immigrants without help navigating our intricate legal system in a language they don't know. The power imbalance in immigration proceedings is only exacerbated by the lack of access to legal help. Deportations are traumatic complicated procedures that nobody should have to face without legal help. National data suggests that immigrants with attorneys are 10.5x more likely to win their cases without lawyers.

For these reasons we thank Senators Hettleman and Waldstreicher for their work on this issue, and urge a favorable report on SB 129. Thank you for your work on this issue.

Sincerely,

Michael DeLong, President
Teresa Woorman, Vice President
Keyna Anyiam, Membership Director
Kathleen Bender, Political Advocacy Director

Steven Cenname, Secretary
Margie Delao, Communications Director
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