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TESTIMONY ON SB#0129 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Your Full Name

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of/ SB#/0129, Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program.

Before my retirement in 2019 I worked for years in Food Service. Many of my co-workers were hispanic and I heard their stories of how the Sheriff in Frederick County was using the 287(b) program to terrorize them and their families. My co-workers described how they felt that living while hispanic was being treated as a crime in our county. A few of the mothers told me that they and other members of their family had been stopped and questioned on occasion and feared what might be happening. They did not know their rights nor did they expect to be informed of them. Economically, the use of legal advice to protect their rights was financially prohibited. America created a new jurisprudence in the world in which the legal system was obligated to consider a person innocent until proven guilty. But to access that right, people needed to be aware of what duties and obligations they had and that the system had towards them. This bill will restore that balance between the legal system and anyone, regardless of immigration status, to the free and full access to the justice system in adjudicating their interactions. Mothers that I worked with explained how they had a child protection system among their community. Since any interaction with the justice system could last, without council to work in it, for an extended period of time they made agreements. If I am detained I want you to go get and take care of my children. No one should fear for their families welfare simply because the legal rights they could exercise is denied to them. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#/0129.**