

SB 129– FAVORABLE
Lauren Renee

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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 Lauren Renee and I am a resident of Baltimore, Maryland. As the wife of 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."**

My husband and I have been together for fifteen years. I am a U.S. Citizen and so are our four children. We were never clear about immigration laws and when we tried to get help from lawyers we found, they took our money and didn't do anything.

When my husband was detained by ICE in 2019, it was very difficult for my family. The kids were so upset because they didn't have a father. I had not worked a job in years, because I was the one who was taking care of the kids. To keep us financially afloat, I had to find a job during the night.

Our kids were very sad during that time. I would get messages all the time from their teachers about how they were struggling in school. Our children saw him be detained and thrown on the ground by ICE. I know this affected them a lot.

I stayed up at night during that time. I was so afraid that we were going to lose my husband and their father. Having a lawyer made a huge difference. We didn't know anything about law, especially immigration law. The attorney was a huge help. We couldn't afford a lawyer, so it meant a lot that it was free. She would reassure me and keep me updated on his case and tell me what was the best chance to get him home.

People in these situations do not know immigration law and everything that you have to do. You need a lawyer. Even though they do not give you one, you need one. Especially if you do not speak the language. You can't find out information and are left in the dark.

I urge a favorable report on SB 129.