

## **Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings HB114/SB129**

**Nolvin Chavez**

### **POSITION: SUPPORT**

Hello good evening Delegates and Senators from the state of Maryland. My name is Nolvin Chavez and I live in Howard County. I am here to ask you to please vote for the Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program. I will tell you a little about the experience that I had. I was separated from my family when we crossed the border into this country and encountered immigration officials. From that moment they separated my wife and my daughter who was only 2 years old. Ever since we set foot in immigration, that was the last time I saw the two of them. Both, my wife and my daughter were processed in 12 days and then they were released, but I was detained and in order to stay with my family, I fought my asylum case. Unfortunately, they denied me everything and they put me in a deportation case, I was in Texas for about a week because I was transferred to Georgia, where I continued to fight my asylum case. My experiences in those detentions were very cruel, like psychological abuse for not speaking the language and because of the color of my skin, the food I received in that place was terrible, an animal was fed better than a person in those detentions, so one got sick and asked for help was bad or simply was not attended.

For my part, I don't want anyone to suffer what my family and I suffered, a forced separation for a year and a half. Despite the fact that I strongly fought my asylum case after 7 months I was deported to my country. When I returned here to the United States, a year and a half had already passed without seeing my wife and daughter. Can you imagine that valuable time lost from watching my daughter grow up?

I don't think it's fair for a human being to treat another human being the way I was treated, I felt treated worse than an animal, despite the mistreatment, the worst thing was living apart from my family and I don't want other families go through that.

When somebody is in detention, they need a lawyer in order to get out. It is impossible to fight your case without representation. But too many people cannot afford representation. That is why we need to pass Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings. Because obviously nobody wants to be separated from their family, as I experienced it.

Ladies and gentlemen, Delegates and Senators, I want to ask you to just think and put yourself in the place of the families that have suffered these resounding separations, just thinking about it would move your heart, let alone living it in your own flesh. Please vote for the Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program and thank you very much for your attention.

