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Catherine M. Bergmann
Riverdale Park, MD 20737

TESTIMONY ON HB0114 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Catherine Bergmann

My name is Catherine Bergmann. I am a resident of District 22. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0114, Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program.

I am a licensed psychologist. My husband and I have lived in Riverdale Park for almost thirty years; we raised our children here.

Immigration issues have always been very close to my heart, because my parents escaped from Nazi Germany as teenagers. Many of my relatives did not, and I am the only person in my extended family of origin to be born in the United States. My parents and grandparents were lucky in that for them the worst was over once they arrived in the United States. I wish that were true for everyone, then and now. Today, immigrants in Maryland may face deportation to the very dangers from which they escaped.

I try to follow the Jewish precept of “tikkun olam,” to repair the world. To me it seems inhumane for someone facing deportation to be in hearings in a foreign legal system, in a language they may not understand, without legal representation. I would like immigrants in Maryland to be treated the way I would’ve wanted my family to be treated. HB0114 would provide legal counsel to immigrants facing deportation.

I am proud to be a long-time Maryland resident and proud of the efforts the state has taken to treat immigrants humanely. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0114.