



February 2, 2022

Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 101
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB114 – Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 114 sponsored by Delegate Nicole Williams. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

The United States' immigration detention program, operated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), is the largest of its kind in the world. The majority of Individuals detained by ICE are not afforded the right to legal counsel for their proceedings. Each individual's circumstances are different.

Oftentimes, detainees do not understand the complex intricacies of our justice system. Their judgment and ability to articulate their circumstances can be inhibited by language and cultural barriers, stress, circumstances, fear. We believe that ICE detainees should be afforded due process in each case to ensure fair treatment.

This bill will ensure, whatever their personal predicament and response, that they can speak to a lawyer who is familiar with their case. It also aims to educate minorities who have been directly affected by detention on their legal rights.

Research shows that immigrants who have access to an attorney are substantially more likely to win their case, but according to CASA and the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition, 80 percent of immigrants detained in Maryland had no legal representation at any point in their case.

The bill fixes critical oversights, and aims to provide individuals with legal counsel when requested. We support this bill because it seeks to provide basic rights, and we believe it will help level the playing field for immigrants and communities of color who have been disproportionately harmed by our country's immigration policies. Therefore, we respectfully urge your favorable vote. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Zainab Chaudry, Pharm.D.
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