

HB 114 – SUPPORT
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"Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program"
House Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 2, 2022

Dear Chair Clippinger and members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Luis and I am a resident of Hyattsville in Maryland. As a former client of the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition, I am writing to express my support for HB 114: Program for Access to Representation in Immigration Proceedings.

I am living with my U.S. Citizen wife 4-year-old son. I have a job as a carpenter.

My experience in immigration jail was quite sad because I was separated from my family for a long time. I've been through a lot of things that I've never been through in my life. My detention affected my family financially because they depend on me. All the time I was detained, I couldn't provide for my son's support. My wife's health was also affected because during the time I was detained, my wife did not have the therapy that she needed on a daily basis for her asthma, nor was she able to buy medicine for her heart.

Early in my case, I consulted a private attorney who told me that I was going to be deported because there was no hope for me getting out of detention and staying in the United States. When I heard that, I felt very sad and resigned myself to what they told me. They recommended that I get a pro bono attorney.

So, I called the CAIR Coalition and got my lawyer through the Prince George's County ISLA Program. At first, I had no hope, but as my case went on, I started feeling more encouraged because my lawyer explained my rights to me, explained how to fight my case and gathered evidence. My attorney gave me a lot of hope when she explained my rights and the kind of case I had, because no one had explained my rights before.

For that reason, I would support this law because it is a good benefit for us immigrants. There are many of us who do not have the money to use a private attorney. We always need the help of public attorneys, for that reason I ask you to support this law.