



February 2, 2022

Chairman Luke Clippinger
Room 101
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support of HB0114, the Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA) – a multi-ethnic, nationwide coalition of the largest immigrant advocacy organizations in the United States, including CASA in Maryland – we write in strong support of HB0114, the Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Program. Facilitating and investing in legal representation for Marylanders in immigration detention promotes due process and advances immigrant inclusion and integration by helping to keep families and communities together. A rapidly growing set of over 50 jurisdictions in 21 states across the country is investing in legal representation, and federal advocacy efforts of organizations like ours have helped to increase Congressional appropriations for this purpose; HB0114 is a timely and worthy continuation of these efforts and we strongly urge your support for the bill.

At NPNA, the aim of our advocacy is to advance inclusive federal policies that help immigrants thrive and in turn make communities more vibrant, healthy and equitable. We advocate, for example, for appropriations that will help relieve naturalization backlogs so that eligible green-card holders can become citizens and fully participate in our society. We also work to bolster immigrant inclusion infrastructure within the federal government by working to create a National Office of New Americans, which would operate similarly to Maryland's newly created Office of Immigrant Affairs, and would help to ensure, for example, that immigrants are able to access COVID-19 information, resources and benefits.

In addition to our policy advocacy, NPNA also hosts the Family Protection Network (FPN), the largest immigrant rights legal services network in the U.S., consisting of 135 attorneys, DOJ-accredited staff, and 12,000 trained community navigators who outreach

to and assist over 320,000 immigrants each year across 41 members and affiliates in 35 states. The FPN provides legal services and information ranging from citizenship applications, DACA renewal support, screening for immigration relief, deportation defense, and community education.

NPNA strongly supports federal, state and local investments in legal representation like HB0114, because meaningful immigrant inclusion means meaningful due process. It is unconscionable that any person could be separated from their family and community, potentially forever, without access to legal assistance that makes navigation of complex immigration laws feasible. As we fight for federally-guaranteed representation in immigration proceedings that could lead to removal, we commend states like Maryland who are stepping up to ensure that immigrants are not exempt from due process and dignity, and to demonstrate that government-funded legal representation in immigration proceedings is credible, responsible and safe public policy. Our hope is that forward-looking states across the country will follow Maryland's lead in ensuring that due process means due process for immigrant residents, regardless of where they are.

We appreciate this opportunity to testify in strong support of HB0114 and Maryland's ongoing efforts to ensure that every Marylander is afforded representation and due process in immigration proceedings.

Please reach out to NPNA's Policy Director Hadi Sedigh at 317.308.8024 or hadi@partnershipfornewamericans.org with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

The National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA)