

Jeffrey A. Harrison

Date: March 1, 2021

Bill Title: Office of the Attorney General – Right to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings

Coordinator

Bill Number: **HB 750**

Committee: Judiciary

Position: **Favorable / Support**

Sponsor: Delegate Atterbeary

Dear Committee Chair Clippinger, Committee Vice-Chair Atterbeary, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB 750.

-In Maryland, immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees are our family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues.

-Regardless of citizenship, every person who is in the United States has rights under the United States Constitution.

-Our federal government's mistakes, abuses, and injustices are inherent features of our country's current immigration, detention, and deportation policies and practices.

-No person should be detained or deported without access to legal counsel.

-As the bill states:

--More than 400 Marylanders in detention every year are forced to fight permanent separation from their family and community.

--At least 7 out of 10 detained Marylanders are now unable to access counsel in immigration proceedings.

--Legal representation dramatically increases the chance that an individual achieves a successful outcome in their immigration case.

--Universal representation pilot programs in Baltimore City and Prince George's County have helped to keep many Maryland families together over the past 3 years.

--Immigration proceedings have a disparate impact on Black and Brown households.

--Providing a right to counsel to Maryland residents in immigration cases is a proven means of keeping families and communities together and avoiding the resulting social, economic, and public health costs of deportation.

--In conclusion: Maryland residents must be able to invoke and enforce the right to legal representation in any immigration proceeding where their liberty is at stake to provide for equal access to justice and the courts. Maryland residents facing deportation must have a right to legal representation in immigration proceedings. The State of Maryland must provide this representation to Maryland residents to assist in the fair administration of justice.

For those reasons, I urge you to **support HB 750**.

Please send a **Favorable** report from the committee. Thank you.

Jeffrey A. Harrison

(a member of Greenbelt People Power)

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