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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB750
**Office of the Attorney General - Right to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings
Coordinator**

My name is Loretta Vitale Saks and I have been a Prince George's County, Maryland resident since 1974. A resident of District 22, I am writing as a core leader of the Bend the Arc - Prince George's County Minyan, and as an ally of CASA. This testimony is in support of HB750.

Our Torah (Old Testament) commands us 36 times to care for the stranger - many times more than it commands us to observe the Sabbath or any other law. Our history as displaced and exiled "strangers" is our constant reminder of our privileged status today, and of our need to fight for those facing harassment, deportation, separation from their families, and so on.

I am the daughter of Italian Jewish immigrants who came to the United States because of the Holocaust. My father and his family were on the last ship to leave Italy before the Germans closed the ports. Thankfully, they were able to gain visas and to later become citizens, settling in Connecticut, where I grew up. My mother survived the Holocaust by hiding in the hills of Asti and emigrated in 1949, after marrying my father and after waiting for several months in limbo awaiting a visa following their marriage in 1948. Both of my parents were proud American citizens for the rest of their lives. Were they still alive, they would be horrified at the obstacles facing immigrants today.

One of these obstacles is the right to representation. Whether someone is able to obtain legal representation in large part determines their ability to win their cases in immigration court. It is abhorrent that despite the high stakes involved when individuals face deportation—permanent separation from their families and their communities, and sometimes life-threatening risks in their countries of origin- the determination of whether or not they get a favorable hearing rests on a capricious system that does not afford them the right of being fairly represented. The situation is even more dire in the case of children.

Please, stand up for our immigrant community and for fair representation. I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB750.

Loretta Vitale Saks