



# Indivisible: Central Maryland

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## TESTIMONY FOR HB0750

### OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL – RIGHT TO COUNSEL IN IMMIGRATION PROCEEDINGS COORDINATOR

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Atterbeary

**Committee:** Judiciary

**Organization Submitting:** Indivisible Central Maryland

**Person Submitting:** Liz Enagonio, advocate

**Position:** FAVORABLE

Indivisible Central Maryland is an unpaid, volunteer grassroots organization of constituents of Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County and Prince George’s County who are dedicated to protecting progressive and democratic values. **Indivisible Central Maryland strongly supports HB0750.**

Many immigrants, when subject to deportation, do not have the funds to retain legal representation. Data shows that, without representation, the likelihood of deportation is very high. Several members of Indivisible Central Maryland volunteer with Asylum Helpers, assisting newly arrived immigrants and asylum seekers get settled into the community. One of our missions is helping find and fund immigration attorneys to represent our clients in their immigration court appearances. Every one of our clients for whom we were able to arrange legal representation has been granted asylum. Sadly, the number of immigrants/asylees needing representation far outpaces the availability of pro bono and “low bono” attorneys.

Based on our experience, our members are very much in favor of this much-needed support of immigrants in our state. We all know that our immigration system is broken. It can take years to become a citizen. While waiting, most immigrants settle down, pay taxes, and live their lives in the same way as citizens. However, the Department of Homeland Security has been relentless in trying to remove law abiding immigrants from the state.

**This needs to change.** Our members believe that immigrants are valued and much-needed members of the Maryland community. We should protect them from unfounded deportation by providing them with legal representation.

We support this HB0750 and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.