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

My name is Louise Weissman, I live in Greenbelt - District 22. Prior to retiring, I worked for United We Dream, the largest immigrant youth-led organization in the country. Now I am a member of Bend the Arc - Prince George's County Minyan, a member of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ), and I am an ally of CASA de Maryland. I am writing to you because it is long overdue that we provide legal representation to detained immigrants in Maryland facing deportation as well as Maryland residents detained in other states. It is time for the State of Maryland to provide comprehensive support to the families of detained Marylanders facing deportation. My testimony is in support of HB750.

The Torah commands us to love and welcome refugees as our neighbors. Leviticus 19:34 states: **“The strangers who reside with you shall be to you as your citizens; you shall love each one as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”** The vast majority of citizens in the United States are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants, many of whom faced oppression in their homelands. As Jews, we understand this current plight. We have been persecuted for our religious beliefs. Throughout our history, we had to flee our homes to save our lives throughout our history.

To fulfill our nation's aspiration to be a welcoming nation, I believe we are obligated to provide immigrants with legal counsel and we should ensure their families receive supportive services. That can be carried out by designating community groups to carry out outreach and education with communities impacted by immigration detention, by developing neighborhood defense committees and by referring individuals to support services.

I am the daughter and granddaughter of immigrants. My paternal grandparents came from Belarus. My mom and her family came from Koretz, Poland and settled in Boston, MA shortly after WWI. The Ahavas Achim Anshi Koretz (The beloved Brotherhood of Koretz) was formed as a mutual aid society. I am proud that my maternal grandfather eventually became an officer of the board.

The United States has always been a beacon of hope for those who made passage to this country. It is time to give immigrants a pathway to citizenship as well as to welcome those who come to our shores in the future. We should be guided by the invitation: **“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free....”**

Both Prince George's County and Baltimore City have developed universal representation programs that have transformed the lives of immigrants facing deportation and their families. It's time for Maryland to follow suit. **I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB750.**

Respectfully,

Louise Weissman