

HB 705 – SUPPORT

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Office of the Attorney General - Right to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Coordinator

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee/House Judiciary Committee

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Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in support of Universal Representation HB 705. I was born in Maryland and have lived my entire life here. I have worked in Maryland both as an RN and then as a Nurse Practitioner.

I have also visited detainees in detention centers and I know, as an eye witness, that there is no healthy amount of time for an immigrant to be detained. Immigration detention centers are hazardous places for both the immigrants and their families.

For this reason, it is critical that all detained immigrants be provided with free legal representation. This will dramatically increase that chance that they are released and can be reunified with their families and loved ones.

This issue has taken on a heightened sense of urgency as we face a worsening pandemic. Serious illnesses and deaths due to COVID continue to rise inside the prisons, not only for the detained immigrant but also for the staff at these facilities. All of these deaths are preventable and would not happen were these detention centers to close down.

In addition, family members suffer when their fathers and husbands are picked up by ICE and locked up out of reach from their family members. Families lose their wage earners and children lose their fathers. These children can no longer concentrate in school and suffer a host of psychological consequences.

I urge the passage of Universal Representation so that families can stay together and be healthy together.

I urge a favorable report on HB 705.