

February 10, 2022

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB559
In Support of “Probation, Not Deportation”, Senate Bill 265/House Bill 559

TO: Maryland General Assembly

Senate
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland

House of Delegates
House Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland

From Suzanne Martin

My name is Suzanne Martin and I have lived in Annapolis, Maryland for 18 years in District #30A. I am the founder and Executive Director of the Annapolis Immigration Justice Network (AIJN)- a grass roots organization serving residents of Anne Arundel County. I share this testimony on behalf of the Annapolis Immigration Justice Network.

Our non-profit formed in 2017 and since then, AIJN has served over 400 residents in Anne Arundel County. Since mid-2018, we have provided financial assistance totaling over \$245,000 in legal fees. AIJN has served non-detained as well as detained immigrants. In addition to financial assistance, we also have a case management team that has helped people in pro se situations to fill out asylum applications, work permit applications, and any other paperwork needed as part of their immigration process. Through my work over the last few years, I strongly support HB 559. I believe it will help keep families together in Anne Arundel county while still providing an additional tool for accountability.

HB 559 will ensure that Probation Before Judgment (PBJ) in Maryland will not lead to unintended consequences for our immigrant neighbors. The Maryland Legislature recognized the value of holding an individual accountable for their actions without attaching the lifelong consequences of a criminal conviction. Those consequences are often even more dire for our immigrant neighbors. Unlike Maryland state law, federal law currently treats a PBJ in Maryland as a criminal conviction, which could ultimately lead to deportation for some people. The resulting pain of permanent separation from family, community, and home goes far beyond what the Maryland Legislature intended for PBJ. HB 559 will simply bring PBJ in line with the Maryland Legislature’s original intention. For these reasons, I fully support HB 559 on behalf of AIJN.

