

Testimony in Support of HB 6659  
“AN ACT CONCERNING CIVIL IMMIGRATION DETAINERS”  
Mariano Cordoso Jr.

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Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Mariano Cardoso Jr., I am in support of the House Bill 6659 and I oppose Secure Communities and what it has done to immigrant families within our communities.

I am currently a student at Central Connecticut State University and am pursuing a career as a Civil Engineer. I am 24 years old. I call New Britain and Connecticut my home for the opportunities it has given my family and me.

I was born in Mexico and I have been living in the United States since before I was two years old. Ever since then, I have been “without papers”. My parents tried many times, to no avail, to adjust my immigration status. Too many crooked and dishonest lawyers and “notarios” stood in their path. My status was not adjusted and I grew up with the notion throughout my adolescent years that I was different and that being undocumented was a barrier that we could not overcome. As I became old enough, I began to comprehend what the consequences would be if, for whatever reason, Immigration knew about my whereabouts. Therefore, being deported and losing my family were among the worst fears I had growing up.

Normal people have fears like: being afraid of heights, public speaking and dying. As a human being, I had those same ones, but none were worse than being deported. For this reason, I always tried with all my might to not get noticed. I never had any problem behaving, but I had to be extra careful. I began to believe that I could not even risk raising eyebrows. I began to assimilate to the shadows.

This, I believed would keep me safe. This was true until my most awful fear started to become real. It was a couple days before the fall semester started. August 26, 2008, a day to remember. I was at my uncle’s house with most of my family, brother, sister, cousins, aunt and uncle. We were all in the backyard as 7 officers walked in through the driveway, that afternoon. There were two that were uniformed as New Britain police officers and the rest were dressed as civilians. I knew that the rest were officers because they had a badge either on the belt buckle or on a lanyard across their chest. They wanted to search inside the house. They had a black and white sketch of the face of a lady. The officers explained that they were warned that the lady was seen in the neighborhood. My family knew that the neighborhood was not a bad one. The officers were told that they needed a warrant to enter. They argued that it was for our own safety. After almost 20 minutes of persisting they became impatient. Afterwards, my uncle, a cousin and I were asked for our names, fingerprints and identifications. We were put in handcuffs. I understood that it was a big misunderstanding. I had done nothing wrong. As I stood there, I listened to everything the officers said. The uniformed officers started checking all the cars for they said that they would not be surprised if a car was unlawfully there. Their insolence could not go unnoticed. I also noticed that the civilian clad officers were the ones in charge. The ones in uniform were there just for the ride or just as a front.

After, they finished with the questions they put the three of us in a white unmarked minivan. As the officers drove away with us inside I still believed that it was a huge misunderstanding and I asked them if we were going "downtown". The two officers looked at each other, directly into each other's eyes, for a brief moment and looked back to answer "We are from immigration. We are ICE." I felt like my world was quaking for I could not believe that my greatest fear had become a reality.

My story is not that different from the many immigrant families in the state. Most families that are separated due to "Secure Communities" are working families just trying to make a living. The only difference is that is not many families with similar background are as fortunate as mine. They end up being separated, torn apart, deported. However all that could change, we have an opportunity to change it. To change the conditions for the families at risk. So I am in support of this legislation which could end these arbitrary arrests and deportations.