

Testimony of Dolman Higueros in Support of Sections 8 and 9 of Raised Bill No. 155

My name is Dolman Higueros. I am 16 years old, originally from Guatemala and a resident of Stamford, Connecticut. I am here in support of sections 8 and 9 of Raised Bill No. 155.

From a very young age, I suffered abuse and abandonment by my father. My dad refused to provide food to me and my sisters as a form of domestic violence against my mother. I remember going to bed hungry many times and watching my poor mother prepare hot water mixed with sugar to sustain us.

During the first 9 years of my life I witnessed physical violence against my mother at the hands of my father. Fleeing from this abuse we were forced to live in a storage room infested with rats which often bit our skin while we slept. Even when we fled, our father continued the abuse against us to the point that he once tried to kill us with his truck while we were walking along a rural road.

Three years later, my mother fled Guatemala fearing for her life on account of the endless abuse by father. I was left in the care of my maternal grandmother, but she died of cancer shortly after.

In the years that followed, my father left me with my paternal grandparents who removed me from school, beat me, denied me food and forced me to work hauling gravel by hand out of a river bed.

Finally, my mom was able to send for me and bring me to the safety of her care in the United States. However, I was stopped by the border patrol and placed in deportation proceedings. After being reunited with my mother while I waited for the deportation process a lawyer from the Center for Children's Advocacy, helped me with a request to remove my father as guardian and asked the Court to make special findings that have allowed me to petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status with the United States Customs and Immigration Services thereby ensuring I can remain in the safety and care of my mother. If my father were to continue to have legal custody I would surely return to the deplorable conditions with my paternal grandparents from which I was finally able to escape.

I attend the tenth grade, have excellent grades and continue to learn English. I also recently got my work permit as part of the immigration process. I finally feel safe and happy in the care of my mother.

I support this bill because I know it can benefit other children who like me were forced to cross the border alone to find a safe home free from abuse and neglect.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,
Dolman Higueros