

Pedro Linares
Hartford, CT

Testimony in Favor of the Trust Act HB 7039
March 30, 2015

Dear Senators and Representatives of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Pedro Linares and I have lived in Hartford for 8 years. My three kids, who are legal permanent residents, my wife and my 2 step-children who are US citizens also live here.

My story begins one morning in March 2012, when a person approached the grocery store where I worked and bought a beer with a fake ID. Minutes later the police accompanied by officials from the Department of Liquor arrived and arrested me. The judge freed me with an order of two days of community service, which I served, and later dismissed my case.

But back then, there was a program that said that the police could give information about your immigration status to ICE, and so I was put under the supervision of ICE and had to report myself every three months before an immigration officer. I never missed an appointment. Last February 23, I reported myself as usual to the immigration officer, but that day my ordeal began. They said: "You're under arrest for overstaying your visa and we will send you to the Dominican Republic in three weeks." I felt that my world was crumbling because I could only think about my family. How would they support themselves, since I was their primary provider, and who would watch over them and make sure they always did the right thing? My daughter was expecting a baby and was very affected by all this. She would not eat and that harmed her pregnancy.

I was transferred to 4 detention centers in less than 4 weeks. ICE only cared about deporting me, and they did not think about the economic and emotional stability of my loved ones. At these detention centers they treat you very badly so you become desperate and ask to be deported instead of continuing to live in such inhuman conditions.

They tried to trick me into signing my own deportation, showing me a document that had my picture and asking "Is that you?" and they said that I had to sign. They did not tell me that I was signing my deportation. But I did not sign. Days full of anguish passed. I could not sleep, I could not eat, all I could think about was my family.

I still wake up scared thinking about those moments, those psychological torture centers. They are full of stories like the story of our friend Jorge Salcedo who has been living in the United States since the age of 14, served in the armed forces of the United States for eight years, has an American wife and daughters, and because of mistake he made 10 years ago, for which he paid, they want to deport and separate him from his family, sending him to a country where he knows no one.

We must raise our voices in support of a law that prevents a person who complies with a court order to then be taken by ICE. I thank God first, then Senator Murphy, my immigration attorney and this movement called Unidad Latina en Acción, because of their efforts and support my deportation was canceled hours before I was supposed to get on the plane that would transport me to Dominican Republic. Thank God this did not happen.

Eternally grateful,
Pedro Linares