

## Support the Immigrant Legal Defense Act

*An Act Ensuring Access to Equitable Representation in Immigration Proceedings*

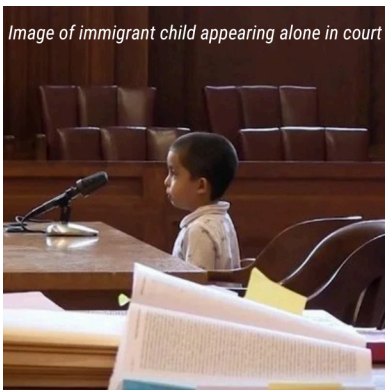
[SD.2057](#) (Sen. Gomez) and [HD.4072](#) (Reps. Rogers, F. Moran)

With a federal administration committed to the mass detention and deportation of immigrants, and a new Congress actively stripping away existing rights and privileges, the Commonwealth must urgently intervene to prevent the deportation of immigrants who live, work and pay taxes in Massachusetts.

**The Immigrant Legal Defense Act would create a public and private-funded program to provide no-cost immigration legal defense to immigrants in Massachusetts who are at imminent risk of deportation, especially those held in federal immigration detention.**

### FACTS:

In immigration court, having an attorney is critical protection against deportation and permanent family separation. There is no right to a government-paid lawyer in immigration court. Those who cannot afford a lawyer must navigate our complex immigration proceedings alone.



Immigrants are 5 times more likely to win relief from deportation if they are represented by counsel. **In Massachusetts, 55% of immigrants with pending cases are navigating their proceedings without a lawyer.**

Detained immigrants with a lawyer are 10 times more likely to win relief than are detained immigrants without one. **There are 369 people in federal immigration detention in Massachusetts as of January 2025.**

Similar programs exist in California, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Washington.

THE SOLUTION: The Immigrant Legal Defense Act would:

- ✓ Subject to appropriation, **require the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) to grant funds to qualified immigration legal service providers** and the nonprofit organizations and law firms who employ them to provide no-cost legal defense to eligible low-income immigrants.
- ✓ **Develop a statewide system** of immigration legal representation coordinated by an existing or established nonprofit organization identified by ORI, which will provide rigorous screening and assigning of cases and beneficiaries.
- ✓ **Establish an advisory board** to include representation by the Committee for Public Counsel Services, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, MIRA Coalition, and at least three community-based organizations that directly serve immigrant populations.