

Congressman G.K. Butterfield
2305 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

March 17th, 2016

Dear Representative Butterfield,

The Durham People's Alliance is writing to express our serious concern about the detention and pending deportation of a student at Riverside High School, Wildin David Guillen Acosta. Our concern has grown urgent since we learned yesterday that Mr. Acosta has been scheduled for deportation on Sunday, March 20th. Action is needed with the utmost speed.

The detention of Mr. Acosta and other teenagers across the state, (known as the NC6) has led to a spike in rates of absence among Latino students in Durham's public schools. There are students as young as 5 years old in DPS who have orders of deportation and fear they could be detained at any moment. Parents are afraid to send, or in some cases even register, their children for school because of students like Wildin who have been detained on their way to school in North Carolina. Students who do come are frequently unable to focus on their studies due to symptoms of PTSD and related disorders, as described in the attached article, *Anxiety and PTSD in Latino Children of Immigrants*. These disorders have burdened our already overstretched school district, which currently has only one Spanish speaking counselor. Many Latino parents are withdrawing from engaging with our schools and supporting their children because of fears that speaking to DPS staff might call attention to their undocumented status.

We call on you to immediately take the following steps towards obtaining the release of this young man so that he can graduate on time from Riverside High School, and so that other Latino students across the district can attend school without fear:

- Call publicly for the immediate release of Wildin David Guillen Acosta due to his fear of persecution by criminal organizations in his native Honduras through asylum, an option which he was unaware of due to ineffective assistance of counsel.
- Call Secretary Johnson of the Department of Homeland Security to urge for the release of Wildin David and the rest of the NC 6 based on the grounds of prosecutorial discretion and,
- Meet with Wildin David's family in Durham, NC and make a statement of solidarity with other parents across the district who have been suffering the repercussions of ICE's increasingly bold and aggressive tactics.

We understand that a member of your staff hosted a meeting with Wildin's mother on Thursday, March 10th, which was also attended by staffers of Representative Price and Adams, and the brother of Alexander Josue Soriano-Cortez, who was detained by ICE in Thomasville, NC. The family members were accompanied by a representative of Alerta Migratoria NC and two

members of the Durham Association of Educators, one of whom is also a member of the People's Alliance board. We applaud your office's reception of these parties.

This contingent subsequently met with staffers of Representative Gutierrez of Chicago, and Senators Reid, Durbin, Tillis, Menendez, and Leahy. One theme that emerged from these meetings was that out of state allies are willing to step up to work for Mr. Acosta's release and that of the NC6, but that they would like to see North Carolina's congressional delegation take the lead on this matter. We call on you to provide this leadership on behalf of not only Wildin, but all the Latino children who are living in fear of the trauma of familial separation in Durham.

National attention is coming to focus on this issue, as evidenced by the Democratic debate in Miami on Wednesday, March 9th, and recent articles about Wildin David's case that have appeared in the LA Times (3/11) and The Nation (3/4.) The Department of Education held a hearing on allegations of civil rights violations by DHS against students in North Carolina on Monday, March 14th that may lead to the DOE taking action against DHS on this matter. But time is of the essence at this critical juncture: in addition to Wildin's scheduled deportation on Sunday, 3 of the 10 known cases of teens detained in NC have already been deported, and two more are scheduled to be deported today, Thursday, March 17th. We call on you to have courage and to lead on the cases of the NC6 and immediately call for their release.

Sincerely yours,

People's Alliance
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