

**Statement of Chairwoman Zoe Lofgren
H.R. 1548, Private Bill for Maria Carmen Castro Ramirez
and J. Refugio Carreño Rojas
Tuesday, March 12, 2019 at 10:00 am**

Mr. Carreño Rojas entered the United States from Mexico in May 1982, when he was nine years old. In 1992, he married Ms. Castro Ramirez. The couple has three U.S. citizen children: Guadalupe (age 25), Ivan (age 24) and Jose (age 11). Two of the children have serious medical conditions that require specialized treatment.

Guadalupe suffers from a seizure disorder called juvenile myoclonic epilepsy. If left untreated, a seizure resulting from this disorder can lead to permanent neurological impairment. Because of this condition, Guadalupe continues to reside with her parents, is treated by a neurologist, and takes anti-epileptic medications. She is able to receive this specialized treatment through her parents' health insurance.

Jose suffers from severe asthma, requiring regular treatment from a pulmonologist. His asthma requires close monitoring, prescription medication, and additional treatment that may include emergency hospital care when it is exacerbated. Without medication and regular treatment, Jose's condition could lead to respiratory arrest resulting in his death. Recently, Jose was referred to a therapist to receive treatment

for anxiety and related symptoms, following evaluation by a child psychologist.

Dr. Scott Cohen, Founder and Medical Director of Global Pediatric Alliance, and Dr. Charles Vega, Clinical Professor at U.C. Irvine School of Medicine, confirm that both children would be subjected to sub-standard medical care if forced to relocate to Mexico, as a result of limited medical expertise and shortages of required medications. Without the ability to effectively control their conditions, the consequences for Guadalupe and Jose could be very serious and could include death.

In 1994, an Immigration Judge granted Ms. Castro Ramirez voluntary departure. Although she did not depart, she subsequently applied as a derivative beneficiary to her husband's application for suspension of deportation. Mr. Carreño Rojas's application worked its way through the court system and ultimately was denied in 1998. In January 2009, Mr. Carreño Rojas was deported to Mexico.

On March 8, 2018, while walking home from work, Ms. Castro Ramirez was attacked at knife point, robbed, and assaulted by five masked assailants. She has cooperated with law enforcement authorities in the investigation of this crime and in December 2018, submitted a

petition for U nonimmigrant status with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. A derivative petition was filed on behalf of Mr. Carreño Rojas in February 2019. As a result of the attack, Ms. Castro Ramirez has been receiving mental health treatment for trauma, depression, and anxiety, and she has been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Neither Mr. Carreño Rojas, nor Ms. Castro Ramirez, have had any adverse interactions with the criminal justice system. Moreover, the family is fully integrated into their community, as demonstrated by numerous letters of support from teachers, civic and religious leaders, employers, and family friends. Despite many challenges, the children have done remarkably well. Guadalupe graduated from the University of San Francisco in 2015, and hopes to one day become a lawyer. Ivan graduated from Humboldt State University in 2017 and works in customer service. With the right support and resources, the family is optimistic that Jose will follow in his siblings' footsteps.

A private bill is the only option for this family. Even if their petition for U nonimmigrant status is approved, it can take many years before a visa is available due to the 10,000 annual cap. In the past five Congresses, this Subcommittee requested reports from Immigration and Customs Enforcement on Mr. Carreño Rojas and Ms. Castro Ramirez.

Those reports revealed no derogatory information about them and I am hopeful that we can once more request a report from ICE and move this worthy case toward a permanent solution.