

TESTIMONY OF REP. DARREN SOTO HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY MEMBERS DAY

Thank you Chairman Nadler and Ranking Member Collins for the opportunity to testify before the Judiciary Committee on my legislative priorities within the Committee's jurisdiction. Specifically, I like to highlight two bills I've introduced, the Protect Patriot Spouses Act and the bipartisan Guardian Accessibility Act.

H.R. 557, Protect Patriot Spouses Act, 14 Cosponsors

According to American Families United, there are as many as 11,800 active U.S. military service families affected by deportation. The story of Alejandra Juarez is one example. Mrs. Juarez is the wife of former Marine Sgt. Cuauhtemoc Juarez who honorably completed his service in 1999.

The Protect Patriot Spouses Act keeps military and veteran families together. H.R. 557 allows eligible military spouses to stay in the United States while their immigration status is being adjusted. The bill applies to the immediate family of service members who have not committed a serious crime. The service members include active, retired, honorably discharged, and those who have died in the line of duty. The Parole in Place program which once protected military and veteran families from immediate deportation has been reduced, putting military and veteran families at risk. Our veterans and families have made great sacrifices. Our government holds an obligation to serve those who serve us.

H.R. 4174, Guardianship Accountability Act of 2019, 4 Cosponsors

In the United States, 1.3 million adults are under court appointed care by guardians. These include seniors and those with disabilities who require assisted care. Many face personal violations of their rights under the care of their guardians. These violations include financial exploitation of assets, civil right violations, medical neglect, abuse, starvation, and the list go on. These abuses have gone as far as threats to life itself. A Central Florida man was victim to the abuse of power by his court appointed guardian. He died due to his guardian filing a "do not resuscitate" order, against his wishes, and without permission from his family, or the court.

These numerous issues call for enacting protection against abuse and neglect that occur under guardianship which is why I introduced H.R. 4174 with the co-sponsorship of Reps. Bilirakis, Crist, Dingell, and Fitzpatrick. The Guardianship Accountability Act allows for oversight and data to create accountability for the protection of vulnerable Americans from abuse and neglect. H.R. 4174 supports numerous recommendations by the Aging Committees' report such as the establishment of a national resource center, encourages less restrictive approaches for guardianship, information sharing among state and federal entities and other relevant organizations.

Once again, thank you to Chairman Nadler and Ranking Member Collins for the opportunity to testify today. I welcome the opportunity to work with Committee on the bills.