Dear Honorable Immigration Judge,

         My name is Emily Nelson Guzman.  I write this letter in support of my husband, Pedro Perez Guzman (Pedro), as he seeks to be released from the custody of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—whether that be on his own recognizance or upon payment of bond.

          I met Pedro in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the year 2000.  We were young and neither of us had cars and we were both waiting for the bus.  He asked me what time it was, even though he had a watch.  Soon, after running in to each other consistently in the neighborhood, he asked me out for Valentine’s Day and that was our first date.  It was very romantic and we fell in love quickly.  Pedro had left California to turn over a new leaf and clean up his life.  He was tired of being in the “wrong crowd” and needed to put some space between himself and the bad influences in his life.  I was in college studying child psychology at the University of Minnesota.  We both wanted to improve our lives for the better and, as we began dating, we taught each other wonderful and important things.  He shared with me his spontaneity, industriousness, cleanliness, equality in a relationship, the importance of family, and passion for justice.  I shared with him academic vocabulary, vulnerability, compassion, making a home, communication of feelings, the importance of education, and unconditional love.  We have grown and shared so much over the almost ten years we have been together.  He supported me through undergraduate school, and then through my Master’s program.  At first, Pedro was skeptical of the world of psychological therapy, but he grew to appreciate it and ended up advising other friends and family to seek help.  I supported him through truck driving school.  We both wanted a better life than what we had before we met each other, and together we have made a wonderful life and family.  He changed my life and I changed his.

             Pedro has always been an incredibly hard worker.  Throughout our time together he has worked very difficult jobs and very long hours until our son came along.  When our son Logan was born, our life changed again.  It wasn’t just about working and being a couple anymore.  It was about making a stable, loving home for Logan.  Pedro chose jobs in which he would be home more often so that he could spend lots of time with Logan.  Our son is 3 years old now and he would not be the amazing, intelligent, compassionate person he is without the influence that Pedro has had on him as a father.  They play together, learn together, and love each other immensely.  They go everywhere together - fishing, the library, the park, the museum.  They are incredibly close.  Since Pedro has been gone, Logan has asked about him everyday.  He misses him horribly.  Each week he invents a new way to save his father and bring him home.  One week he will be Spiderman and the next week he will be Batman.  He asks me everyday when he will come home.  There is a gaping hole in our home without Pedro.  Because it has affected us so much, we began to seek psychological therapy ourselves.  Therapy has helped us to cope with his absence, but it won’t replace my husband and Logan’s father.  The pain of separation often seems unbearable.

           Pedro is a very empathetic person and always wants to help.  Not only does he help friends and family, but he also loves to help complete strangers.  He is outgoing and speaks perfect English; many people are surprised by that because he is Latino.  He stops and helps people who are stranded by the side of the road, he saves dogs that are abandoned, he lends money to those who need it, and gives advice to young people who are going down the wrong path (just as he started to do when he was young).  He has always told me that the work that had the most impact on him was with the developmentally disabled.  When he worked with that population he began to see their powerlessness and the other employees that would not give the clients compassionate care.  He began to speak to his coworkers about the treatment and he served as an advocate for those who didn’t have a voice.  He has said that working with the developmentally disabled has changed his life and made him realize what true powerlessness is and that all people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

       From a therapist’s perspective, instead of only his wife, I know that Pedro recognizes that he made mistakes in his youth.  He was brought to this country at a very young age and had difficulty acculturating and adjusting.  He lived in an area whose population was comprised primarily of white people (San Luis Obispo, CA) and, in turn, he was ridiculed for being different.  His mother, a single mother, worked excessively to support her children and did the best that she could with what she had.  Pedro found camaraderie in a group of youth that were not going down the right path but as a young person, he felt that at least he belonged.  After making many mistakes he decided to turn his life around and move to Minnesota.  He ended up accomplishing something that very few troubled youth accomplish: making a happy, stable home with a loving wife, being clean and sober, and working hard in rewarding jobs.  This is an amazing feat!  He is an enormous benefit to the United States and our community in North Carolina.  Please understand that this is not just any immigrant.  Pedro is an amazing, loving, worthwhile, humble, hardworking man that is a wonderful father and husband.  If he was to be forced to leave the country, he would be sorely missed by many people, citizens and immigrants alike, but most of all it would be devastating to me and my son, both American-born citizens, that only want our husband and father to come home to us so that we can all be productive, happy members of this country.  Thank you for your time and for your attention in this very important matter.

Sincerely,

 Emily Nelson Guzman, LPC

Wife, Mother, and Therapist