

Wish granted: Elyria dad gets to stay

Sara Shookman, Reporter

August 16, 2013

ELYRIA -- An Elyria dad scheduled to be deported back to Mexico gets to stay in the U.S., keeping his family together for a year.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokesperson Khaalid Walls confirms Pedro Hernandez-Ramirez was granted a one-year stay of removal.

The family's immigration attorney David Leopold told Channel 3 News the stay isn't a permanent solution, but they hope would give Pedro enough time to benefit from updated immigration policies.

Pedro is like many of 11 million undocumented people in the United States waiting to see how Washington could create a path to citizenship.

Thursday a bipartisan task force encouraged the House to move a Senate-passed immigration reform bill Thursday.

Support for the family is pouring in from around the community, Senator Sherrod Brown's office and even an online petition.

Pedro, now in the Geauga County Jail, could be released and reunited with his family sometime Friday.

Hernandez-Ramirez cares his wife, his disabled step-son and three other children.

"Please help me try to help him stay. He's not a criminal," said his wife, Seleste Wisniewki, who is a U.S. citizen. "I understand that he doesn't have the proper documentations to stay in the United States. But the reason that he wants to be here and needs to be here is for us. His family is here, his life is here."

Seleste and Pedro met in 2004, after he had living in the U.S. undocumented for more than a decade. Since then, he's become a father to Seleste's three older children, and the five-year-old little boy they share.

"All of the children is suffering, really tremendously that their dad is not here," said Seleste. "But Juan more so that he doesn't understand why Pedro is not here."

Their son Juan, 24, was born with cerebral palsy and a seizure disorder. He's immobile and requires constant care with a feeding tube and diapers.

"He's just as if he's still a baby," she said.

Pedro is his primary caretaker and does not work outside the home. The demands on their lives and the cost for attorneys made them think Pedro's citizenship was not a priority.

"With our life being so hard now and so many things to do daily, we just never added anything else to the to-do list," said Seleste.

But in April, that changed. Pedro was deported when he was pulled over here in Northeast Ohio with a license plate light out. He had been deported once before for being illegal, more than a decade ago while he was living in California.

The pair, trying to do the right thing, got married in Mexico, where Pedro was living. Seleste, a U.S. citizen, started the process to bring Pedro back legally. But they soon learned that could take decades.

"Under the current law because of the technical difficulties that are associated with Pedro's immigration history and some of the problems, it would take upwards of 20 years.," said David Leopold, the family's immigration attorney.

Desperate to return to his family here, Pedro crossed the border again and this time, in July, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agents were watching.

"He left the house ... and probably one fourth or a half of a mile down the street, border patrol stopped him, they already had his paperwork in the car and everything," said Seleste.

Now, Seleste is determined to keep Pedro in the country for her sake and her children.

"I'm asking, anybody and everybody please to understand the situation, bring it to heart and help us bring Pedro home," she said.

Pedro is like many of 11 million undocumented people in the United States, people waiting to see how Washington could create a path to citizenship.

Thursday a bipartisan task force in Washington encouraged the House to move a Senate-passed bill that could do just that.

Support for the family is pouring in from around the community, Senator Sherrod Brown's office and even an online petition.

<http://m.wkyc.com/localnews/article?a=310630&f=1336>