

TESTIMONY FOR HEARING IN HARTFORD

GOOD EVENING FELLOW CITIZENS,

MY NAME IS XIOMARA GOUBOURN AND I AM HERE TO TESTIFY IN SUPPORT OF CONTINUED FUNDING FOR FAMILY HOUSING PROGRAMS IN THE STATE OF CT, AND SPECIFICALLY FOR DCF'S AND DSS'S SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR FAMILIES PROGRAMS. FOR SEVEN YEARS, I HAVE BEEN A CASE MANAGER FOR DOZENS OF FAMILIES. DURING THESE YEARS, I HAVE SEEN FIRST HAND THE IMMENSE DIFFERENCE THIS PROGRAM HAS MADE TO HUNDREDS OF FAMILIES LIVING UNDER THE RAVAGES OF HOMELESSNESS AND HOPELESSNESS. MOST OF THE FAMILIES WE SERVE ARE SEPARATED FROM ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTIES OFTEN CONCERNING THEIR INABILITY TO FINANCIALLY OR EMOTIONALLY SUPPORT THEIR HOUSEHOLDS. IN ALL CASES, THE CHILDREN WHO ARE REMOVED FROM THOSE IMPOVERISHED FAMILIES ARE THE ONES WHO SUFFER THE MOST. POVERTY IS ONE OF THE MOST VIOLENT ACTS INFLICTED ON THOSE CHILDREN, AND THIS IS TOO OFTEN COMPOUNDED BY SEPARATION FROM THE ONLY PERSONS THEY KNOW AND LOVE - TCI'S SHF, FUNDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES, PROVIDES RENT SUBSIDY AND SERVICES THAT PROMOTE THE REUNIFICATION AND PRESERVATION OF SUCH FAMILIES. EACH FAMILY IS ASSIGNED A CASE MANAGER WHO HOLISTICALLY ASSESSES THEIR NEEDS, COMPILES A SERVICE PLAN TO ADDRESS THOSE NEEDS AND ASSISTS THEM IN IDENTIFYING AND OBTAINING SUITABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN NON-IMPACTED NEIGHBORHOODS. HOUSING THEN SIGNIFIES THE BEGINNING OF A

HEALING PROCESS BROUGHT ABOUT THROUGH COLLABORATION WITH OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. SHF IS CURRENTLY SERVING OVER 500 FAMILIES, MORE THAN 1200 FAMILIES HAVE BEEN HOUSED AND, AT LAST SURVEY, OVER THREE THOUSAND CHILDREN HAD BEEN HOUSED/REUNIFIED WITH THEIR PARENTS. NINETY-THREE PERCENT OF THE FAMILIES SERVED MAINTAIN HOUSING AND THERE IS A 100 PER CENT UTILIZATION OF THE VOUCHERS THEY RECEIVE. THERE ARE CURRENTLY 778 FAMILIES ON THE WAITING LIST AND REFERRALS CONTINUE TO COME IN AT THE RATE OF ONE HUNDRED PER MONTH – AS A CASE MANAGER WORKING DIRECTLY WITH THESE FAMILIES, I GET TO EXPERIENCE FIRST HAND THE ANXIETY AND STRESS PARENTS ARE UNDER WHEN I FIRST MEET THEM. I HAVE SEEN DISBELIEF WHEN I EXPLAIN WHAT THE PROGRAM OFFERS (SECURITY DEPOSIT, MONTHLY SUBSIDY AND A LIFE COACH TO HELP THEM NAVIGATE COMPLICATED AGENCY SYSTEMS) I HAVE ALSO SEEN TEARS OF JOY WHEN A FAMILY RECEIVES THE KEYS TO THEIR NEW APARTMENT, SOME OF THEM STATING THAT UNTIL THAT MOMENT, THEY DID NOT BELIEVE IT WOULD HAPPEN FOR THEM. THE COST EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM IS OUTSTANDING, BUT ALONG WITH THE COST SAVINGS, THE PROGRAM SAVES FAMILIES WHO INTEGRATE INTO COMMUNITIES BENEFITTING BOTH IN THEIR SUCCESS.