

TESTIMONY: Alma Vargas

Dear Members of the Committee,

I, Alma Vargas, would like to share my experience that I have had and the good fortune I have had to encounter in my path people who have given me the experience of working as a team with my children and myself. I am a single mother of 5 children. I have always tried to fight and maintain my home, my bills and food for my children every day. From 1997 when I arrived in the United States from Puerto Rico, I discovered that my oldest son had ADHD and learning problems, another son had mental retardation, another child had something else, and that is how I started my life here, alone and without any family. Then I realized that I could look for help and I found the Department of Children and Families for voluntary services. The years that I spent involved with DCF for me were the best that I spent in my life, I am grateful for the programs of Star Mentoring, Catholic Charities, and others.

I always suffered from depression and frustration because I paid a lot of money in rent, and I even ended up on the street at one time, and landed in a shelter with my children. It was hard for me to be the mother I wanted to be when I was always stressed about money. Every time that I tried to get back up again, something would stop me. I finally got out of the shelter and looked for an apartment, where I had to pay a lot for rent and a lot in bills, and I got really behind again in everything. Finally my time arrived and DCF referred me to Supportive Housing. I said finally there is a light in my life for me and my children, an opportunity to live better and have a better quality of life for all of us. Then, I had a fire in my apartment and lost everything again. But this time, there was my Case manager from Supportive Housing, giving me emotional support and all the help she could, like the essentials of a roof over our head for my children, furniture, a security deposit, and anything else that was in her power to give me.

Supportive Housing was good for me because most of the other programs focused on my children, but Supportive Housing focused on me. They taught me how to use my money, and that it is the most important thing to pay my rent, the bills, food and above all to always try to save a little. I want to thank them for all the ways they have helped me, thank you for everything and I really believe and know that the Supportive Housing Program is very beneficial for all families like mine, especially because now I have my voucher. There has been a big change, now I live better, in a quieter area in a place that is big enough for my family. But the best is that now I know that I have a roof over my head that I can pay for, whether I am working or studying, or like when I had to stop working for a while to take care of my children's special needs. No matter what happens, I can pay my rent that I can afford according to my budget. I do believe that Supportive Housing is a good program—for all families, the name says it all: Support. I thank DCF for giving me this and other programs because they are what kept my family together.

I thank all of you on the committee for taking the time to listen to my experience and I hope that other families have the good fortune that I have to get a voucher and be a part of the Supportive Housing Program.

I also thank my Case managers for all of their good work.

Alma Vargas