

December 9, 2008
Appropriations Committee – deficit mitigation hearing

Testimony of Sherry Dougan Morgan
Re Legal Aid funding.

Hello, my name is Sherry. I sincerely thank you for giving me the opportunity to let you know CT Legal Services has assisted me and given myself and my child a brighter future. Unfortunately, I am not alone in this situation. The statistics are grueling, Domestic Violence leads to a wide array of other social and economic problems. I am not and was not asking for a hand out, when I became a client of CT Legal Services, rather I was in need a hand UP. The same hand up that far too many people need. Please support CT Legal Services and agencies such as theirs. Access to free Legal Services can be the difference between victim and survivor.....how do I know? I am a survivor !

Nearly 2 years ago I took my son as left my abuser. Not knowing where to turn I went to the Susan B. Anthony Project -- a local shelter in Torrington for victims of Domestic Violence. They were able to provide counseling and assistance with housing. However, CT Legal Services was the only option I had as far as legal matters. I had hard decisions to make, including legal matters. As you can only imagine, after over 15 years of marriage to an abusive man I felt totally helpless. My abuser to this day continues to make attempts at controlling me. If it were not for Ct Legal Services I would have no way to legally resolve issues and break free from this man. My legal issues include custody and visitation, child support, tax issues, alimony and my impending divorce.

I have received help from CT Legal Services and because of their support I have been able to move on with my life. 18 months later I am still in the process of resolving many of the legal issues. I hold down a job, hope to enroll in College and most importantly I look to the future. This is a very different place than where I was 2 years ago. Without CT Legal Services help I truly feel I could have been further victimized not only by my husband but by the legal process involved in ending my abusive marriage and protecting my child.

I am well aware of the need to tighten our belts and reduce wasteful spending. I am here on behalf of the victims of Domestic Violence imploring YOU to help them become survivors. Access to CT legal services has truly been a life changing service for myself and my child. I implore you as you consider where to cut / spend Connecticut Dollars think of how many people CT Legal Services helps. We are people who have made a choice to move on and need legal services to become survivors.