

Testimony Supporting  
H.B. No. 6143, An Act Concerning Protections for a Tenant Whose Landlord Is  
Subject to a Foreclosure Action  
Testimony of Ben Gross<sup>1</sup>  
To the Committee on Housing  
February 19, 2009

Distinguished Members of the Housing Committee,

My name is Ben Gross. I am testifying today on behalf of Cheryl Cox, a client I help to represent in the Landlord-Tenant Clinic at Yale Law School. Cheryl couldn't make it today because she couldn't take the day off from her job at the Harborside Nursing Home in Woodbridge. Cheryl wanted me tell the committee that she supports House Bill 6143.

Cheryl has lived in Connecticut her whole life. Right now, she lives at 234 West Hazel Street in New Haven with her three children: Angel (who is 17), Travis (who is 14), and Lesley (who is 11). Her oldest son, Chaz, moved out when he went to Washington to attend Howard University. Every single one of her children is on the honor roll. When I spoke with Cheryl last Saturday she told me that going to college isn't an option in the Cox household, it's a requirement.

Cheryl told me she raises her kids to a certain standard, and that's not always easy for a single working mother. She told me her kids need to live in a place where they can walk home from school without their mother worrying if they'll run into trouble. Where they can go out to play without having drug dealers selling across the street. When Cheryl lived with her mother when her children were young, she barely let her kids leave the apartment. One morning when they came home from church they found a bullet hole in the paneling below the living room window from a stray gunshot.

It took Cheryl a full six months to find her current apartment. She moved to West Hazel Street in May and since then she paid her rent on time every month until the foreclosure. Even after the bank brought an eviction against her in November, she has set aside money for her rent every month; she just doesn't know whom to pay.

The looming threat of eviction has shaken up the entire Cox family. Cheryl has cared for the house like it was her own, fixing a sewage leak in the basement and replacing the security floodlights on the side of the house just last week. But now she's unsure whether she should even get new blinds because she knows, under current Connecticut law, she could be out on the street any day.

Travis, Cheryl's youngest son, cried when his mom told him about the eviction. He remembers the old neighborhood and knows how hard it was to find a decent home. His

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<sup>1</sup> This testimony was prepared through the Yale Law School Landlord Tenant Advocacy Clinic under the supervision of J.L. Pottenger, Jr.

older adoptive sister Angel suffered a brain injury when her birth mother shook her as an infant. Cheryl fought to get Angel into the Hyde Leadership School in Hamden, where she gets the attention she needs and is excelling. If they are evicted, Cheryl doesn't know where she'll end up.

Cheryl loves her children and her home. She has done nothing, absolutely nothing, to merit eviction. She has seen the places boarded up on Winchester Avenue and what it's done to the neighborhood over there, and she cannot understand why the bank wants to throw her out of her house just so it can be vandalized and drag down the neighborhood.

Finally, Cheryl asked me to please ask the committee to consider the people this bill could help. She believes she is finally getting a foothold, and eviction would be an enormous setback for her family.

Both Cheryl and I thank you for your time.