

**Committee On Housing
Public Hearing
February 19, 2009**

**Testimony Of Susan DeLeon, Mother and Conservator for
John DeLeon
On House Bill 6143
An Act Concerning Protections For A Tenant Whose Landlord
is Subject To A Foreclosure Action**

These are the words of John DeLeon. This testimony is to let everyone here today know why it is so important that there are protections in place for a tenant whose landlord is subject to a foreclosure; especially when tenants have done nothing wrong. Besides the fact that evicting an innocent tenant is a discriminatory act, it is a hardship for families. And we can't take for granted the fact that a tenant might be in situation like my son, John, who has been struggling for many years with a degenerative disease. Being asked to leave his apartment turns his life upside down.

John's words:

I wasn't surprised that the house I lived in was under foreclosure. Since I have lived here, (about 2 years), I have had a pretty much absent landlord.

Some history:

When I was about 21 years of age, it was discovered that I had a disease called myotonic dystrophy. That is a somewhat rare form of muscular dystrophy with onset during the adolescent years. The disease slowly destroys the distal muscles in the body. From a weakened immune system, I have also been dealing with hairy cell leukemia, psoriasis, arthritis, asthma, skin cancer, and diabetes to name a few of my other issues. My life has been quite stressful as most of it is taken up with visiting doctors, long hospital stays, and more recently last year when I went into heart failure and needed to have a pacemaker defibrillator put in. This resulted in a long stay in intensive care on a respirator. I remember when I first went to Griffin Hospital. I could not breathe. I pressed my lifeline and within seconds, the ambulance was there to take me around the corner from my home to the emergency room. I was then transported to St. Raphael's Hospital where I struggled for life for almost two weeks. I fortunately won the fight as I am here today to pass onto you my thoughts about the eviction of innocent families.

At this point, I do not have much stability in my life. This disease has taken most of my control from me. However, the one thing that I have felt good about is my apartment. When I was recovering from my surgery last year, my apartment was a place that made me feel good. It is mine, I love it, and it is set up in a way that allows for me to function each day. My mom and dad found it for me as I was previously living in a two story apartment and could no longer navigate the stairs.

Getting an eviction notice:

When I received my first eviction notice, I panicked. All I could think of was how am I going to get myself another suitable place to live where I can have the same things I have now. It is enough of a struggle getting up each day with the help of a personal care assistant, shower, get dressed, swallow 14 pills a day with a weak esophagus, have my body slathered with cream for my skin condition, and maintain some normalcy in my life. Thinking that I would be homeless was very stressful and upsetting – I know there are other places, but the energy to make that happen is no longer there for me. I felt like the end of the world was coming and I would have no where to go – if I were evicted, I would feel trapped. Because of all I have been through and all of the stuff I am presently going through – if I had to move, I would feel like I would have lost everything.

I live in a nice place, a nice neighborhood where it is quiet and the neighbors help one another and I live around the corner from the hospital, a place I unfortunately have to use frequently. It is very convenient especially because I have my lifeline when I am in trouble. My heart doctor is at Griffin and that is very convenient for me.

When I talked to my attorney, I felt more at ease. But I do still have the anxiety of knowing that I might lose my home; the place that I feel the most secure.

I get mad and sad at times – my condition is getting worse and I am getting to the point where I can't get out as easily. It is hard for me to want to associate with people when I am discouraged.

Each day you run into extra obstacles that make it harder to get around. My muscles are weaker, my legs are like jelly – I can not walk and have to resort to my wheelchair, pain in my joints – stiffness – difficulty swallowing and breathing.

I have a Personal Care Assistant everyday of the week. Both of my attendants live nearby.

This bill is important because there might be other people in a similar situation. And they shouldn't have to go through all of the fretfulness and the pain I am experiencing and anxiety that I am enduring due to this possible eviction. People with physical disabilities have enough to contend with without other things to worry about. A typical week for someone in my condition is struggling to get to appointments, getting dressed, taking a shower, putting on socks, sneakers – Other people who are not disabled don't understand what we go through on a daily basis. They can't imagine what it is like to be living with the physical ailments that I have to endure everyday; they wouldn't understand what it is like to try to just get around, let alone move.

Please strongly consider and pass house bill #6143, because it will help others to have hope. Banks are institutions, not people – the consequences of what they are doing by evicting families is unjust. I can't just pick up my stuff and get out. All of the responsibility for me would be put on others. This is just not fair. I pay my rent, I keep my house in order, and I appreciate what I have. There are thousands of us out there who need your support. The good tenant is taking the blame for an irresponsible landlord. Think about what it would be like for you to be asked to leave your home and find another. The energy that would take and the disruption to your family would be overwhelming. It would also be humiliating. Asking a person or family to leave their home without good reason is a devastating blow, especially to a person like me, already losing ground daily and struggling just to get through a single good day.