

February 9, 2010

Testimony of Carmelina Carta in support of funding for legal services:

I am sorry for not being able to be here in person but I am elderly, have some physical problems, and am in a nursing home.

When I was still living at home, I had a lot of problems with bills and people calling me all the time threatening me if I did not pay them. My husband and I had started using our credit cards to pay for medicines that we could not afford to buy. Our only income was from Social Security and a small pension of my husband's. It was very scary to us to get these calls and have people yell at us and threaten us.

My home health care worker suggested that I call New Haven Legal Assistance and I did. Pat Kaplan is my lawyer there and she helped me by writing letters to the credit card companies telling them not to call me. When they started suing us in Small Claims Court, she explained to them that we were elderly, disabled and on Social Security.

After my husband died a few months ago, she helped me again. I moved into a nursing home because I was scared of living by myself and she is now helping me apply for programs so I can get out of the nursing home and live on my own. She has one of her legal interns working with me and helping me in the nursing home with the applications for housing. She has found a program called Money Follows the Person that will help me move to my own apartment.

I do not know what I would have done without legal aid. They are there for people like me who are scared and old and need help. Please make sure the funding for legal aid continues.

Carmelina Carta