



TOWN OF VERNON

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Testimony in Support of Legal Aid Funding

I am here this evening to urge you to support funding for Connecticut Legal Services. This agency provides a variety of services for those citizens who are very low income and in need. If this agency is to continue this important work, they need this funding as they have experienced major revenue losses due to the downturn in the economy.

I have worked with Legal Aid Services for over 25 years and their commitment, knowledge and expertise is exceptional. Let me give you several examples of how they have helped some of my residents.

In my capacity as Director of Social Services, I had a mentally retarded 52 year old resident whose elderly mother passed away and there was no one to care for him. The State Department of Developmental Services, formally the Department of Mental Retardation, denied services as he was not identified as mentally retarded before the age of 18. I was repeatedly told by other agencies that nothing could be done. I turned to Legal Aid Services and with the help, knowledge and expertise of a legal aid attorney, I was able to challenge the State's decision. Now, this gentleman is happy and receiving the much needed services to be a production member of society.

Recently, I had another resident, a legal immigrant, who was receiving medical assistance through the State. This is a young woman who recently gave birth to a child, was diagnosed with cancer. She could not receive cancer treatment as her medical assistance was discontinued due to the changes implemented by the State. Legal Services was able to reverse those changes and this woman has had her medical assistance reinstated and today is receiving medical treatment.

These are only a token example of the services this agency provides. It is crucial and essential that they be able to continue their important work. To social service providers like myself, they are our unsung heroes who are not out to receive any recognition but work tirelessly for those citizens who are the most vulnerable in our State.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Claydon
Director of Social Services