

February 9, 2010
TESTIMONY OF MARSHA LINDSTROM
BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF FUNDING FOR LEGAL SERVICES

My family and I are grateful for what Connecticut Legal Service has done to help our sister Rani. We fully appreciate the critical services the organization provides and the importance of its work.

Rani is 54 years old and has suffered from mental illness most of her adult life. In spite of her disability she successfully lived independently in the community all of her life until a few years ago. At that time in addition to her mental health issues she had become morbidly obese, suffered from a number of complex medical issues and was no longer able to take care of herself at home. Rani was admitted into a nursing home facility for rehabilitation.

Nothing could have prepared Rani or our family for what happened next. Rani was different, not your typical nursing home resident, and she presented a unique and challenging situation for the nursing home, because of her mental illness and her obesity. Instead of the nursing home working on developing an effective care plan to meet her needs, Rani became the target of discrimination, neglect and abuse at the nursing home. This unjust treatment only further exasperated her mental health condition and her mental and physical health declined rapidly. Rani was the subject of multiple involuntary discharge notices and ultimately the nursing home illegally refused to readmit her after a brief hospital stay. As a result Rani was forced to remain in an expensive acute care setting for eight months while a complex legal battle ensued.

Rani did not have the financial resources to seek the legal help she desperately needed and turned to Connecticut Legal Services. Attorney Joelen Gates and the Connecticut Legal Service Team, through their outstanding legal knowledge, professionalism, leadership and perseverance, were able to prevail on Rani's behalf several times over coming the involuntary discharge notices and in the end successfully helped Rani return to her home at the nursing home. Our family could not imagine what would have happened to Rani and where she would be today if not for Connecticut Legal Services.

Today Rani resides in the same nursing home and has an effective care plan in place that meets her mental health and rehabilitation needs. To date she has lost 174 pounds and continues to make progress. She leads an exercise group twice a week and is an inspiration to other residents and even staff. Rani continues to make progress each day and is working on a goal to return to her home in the community. The progress Rani has made is because Connecticut Legal Services protected her rights when she needed legal representation.

Connecticut Legal Service is a critical legal agency that services the most in need residents of Connecticut. If Connecticut Legal Services is not properly funded there will be no place for these people to turn to get the representation they so desperately need and deserve. Please support funding for legal services – the work they do is so important and needed by so many people like my sister.

Thank you for your time.