

Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee Chairs and Committee Members

Good evening. My name is Rachael Davis. I'm the Beyond Shelter CT Housing Coordinator for the Friendship Service Center in New Britain. I urge you and Governor Rell not to cut 25% from the Housing and Homelessness line item in the Department of Social Services Budget, or even anything.

The Friendship Center is an agency with a Continuum of Care approach to providing services for the working poor, an oxymoron, the disenfranchised, those experiencing homelessness and generally speaking those less fortunate than many of us sitting in this room tonight. We have; 37 emergency shelter beds for women, men & children in addition to having a no-freeze policy, 15 rooms of transitional housing for men & women, 31 units of scattered site Permanent Supportive Housing, a soup kitchen, an emergency needs/homeless prevention program, and we are part of the municipal committee that administers and the fiduciary for the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing (HPRP) funds. We will soon have 21 apartments in 2 buildings for Permanent Supportive Housing.

Ending homelessness requires different levels of service – Emergency shelter, transitional housing, Rental Assistance Program (RAP) certificates to help defray the cost of decent, safe private rental housing, Security Deposits, prevention interventions, etc. and jobs – all these are part of the equation.

If emergency shelter, transitional housing, RAP certificates, Eviction Prevention and Security Deposit Guarantees and other DSS program budgets are cut, staff will be cut. As a result, it will be necessary to place strict limits on the number and type of people to be served by emergency housing and other programs.

Beyond Shelter and other Prevention Case Management Support Services bridge gaps by having outreach case managers work with families living in scattered site apartments giving advice on difficult problems and encouragement which enhance self-esteem and self-sufficiency. Also, these support services assist families to link to mainstream federal, state and local resources.

Outreach/field case managers are able to solve many everyday, yet sometimes overwhelming problems through landlord/tenant mediation, job placement, transportation, after school programs, assistance with daily living activities, access to health care, etc.

Let me tell you the story of one family I work with - a working mother and her little girl. Mom is trained as a medical assistant, fluent bi-lingual, and employed at a medical center. But, her job is a receptionist position that pays \$8.50/hr. Based on her gross monthly income of \$1435 she should be able to afford a safe, decent 2-bedroom apartment w/ H/HW included at \$700.00/month. That equals 49% of her gross income for housing. She did have such an apartment for about 11 months until her hours were reduced; she got behind on the rent and was subsequently evicted. She's fortunate; she

can stay with her sister for a few months while she looks for an apartment. She has been approved for HPRP rental assistance, but landlords are leery to take a chance on her because of her eviction and lack of substantial income. I've had numerous property owners ask me:

"What happens when the HPRP rental assistance runs out?"
"Is the Friendship Service Center willing to co-sign the lease?"

I understand the property owner's dilemma, there is no easy answer and so I present the questions to you and Governor Rell, "what happens when you cut the RAP budget, when you cut the Eviction Prevention Assistance, when you cut the Security Deposit Guarantee dollars, when the HPRP \$ runs out, are you willing to co-sign a lease?"

What happens when people like this family can no longer stay with their family members and shelters are closed or cut back due to funding reductions? Will you put them up?

From a practical, economic perspective, it is less expensive to house families in various size New Britain apartments with average rental costs ranging from \$600.00 - 975.00/month, H/HW included, than for families to not have access to or lose their RAP certificate, be evicted and wind up for extended periods in an emergency shelter, or risk a family member losing their housing because they're doubled-up or worse yet, die on the streets.

I urge you to provide at least flat funding for the Department of Social Services budget and their programs for Rental Assistance (RAP) Certificates, Emergency Shelters, Transitional Living, Security Deposit, Eviction Prevention, and other such programs. It is practical, economically responsible, and compassionate.

Thank you.