



ESTABLISHED 1659

CITY OF NORWICH
CONNECTICUT

NORWICH HUMAN SERVICES

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Lee-Ann Gomes
Norwich Human Services, Supervisor
Public Testimony February 26, 2010
HB 5148 Concerning Judicial Branch Funding

My name is Lee-Ann Gomes and for the past 24 years I have worked in human services for the City of Norwich with extremely low-income populations. I am here today to request that you ensure adequate funding for CT Legal Services through Judicial Branch funding.

We all are painfully aware of the difficult economic times in which we find ourselves, however, there are certain protections that must be kept in place to keep people from harm; funding to CT Legal Services is a prime example.

Everyone's resources are stretched and stress. Social agencies, landlords, utility companies, and others must find ways to cut costs and survive. Oftentimes, the cutting measures are not legal and are at the expense of vulnerable populations like the poor. Example after example of instances where the poor were taken advantage of, either knowingly or inadvertently, can be given:

- The landlord who tries to cut costs by not providing adequate heat
- The utility company who tries to make an exorbitant payment agreement or terminates services during the moratorium
- The dept of social services who tries to discontinue medical benefits to legal permanent residents
- The abusive husband who throws his battered wife and kids out onto the streets

These problems need to be remedied in a way that only the experienced, committed attorneys at CT Legal Services can do. These attorneys and their services are committed to helping people in times of crisis. Social workers like me need to have them available to bring these issues to light to protect people. They are always our last best defense before tragedy.

We are not naive. We know there have to be deep cuts again this year. We do know that poor people have already taken more than their fair share of hits, through job loss, wage freezes, no cost of living increases, reduced medical care, increased housing and utility costs, etc... Please do not add to their burden by cutting the very service that protects their legal rights.

Thank you,
Lee-Ann Gomes