

Testimony of Ann Mitchell

In Support of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center's Funding Request

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell you about the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. In 2006, I approached the Connecticut Fair Housing Center about my landlord's refusal to allow my daughter to get the therapeutic dog recommended by my daughter's doctor. As a result of the work of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center on my behalf, my daughter has her therapy dog she needs. I ask that you approve full funding for the Center so it can continue its important work.

My name is Ann Mitchell. I live with my two daughters, one of whom has a severe seizure disorder. To control the number and severity of her seizures, my daughter's doctors recommended she get a service dog. I approached my landlord about getting a dog and he said no. I explained that this animal would not be a pet but was an important component of the medical treatment my daughter was receiving for her seizure disorder. I supplied my landlord with a note from my doctor but he still said no. I was very worried because my daughter's seizure disorder seemed to be getting worse. It was interfering with her ability to go to school and to learn.

I felt I had nowhere to turn until I found the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. They agreed to represent me and my daughter. We filed a complaint with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities but my landlord refused to allow my daughter to get the dog she needed. With the help of an attorney from the law firm of Pepe and Hazard the Connecticut Fair Housing Center agreed to file a case in federal court in an effort to change my landlord's illegal habits. We finally moved from our apartment in desperation into a unit where my daughter was able to get a therapeutic dog. The dog has made a significant improvement in my daughter's life.

She went from 8 - 10 seizures a month to being seizure free. Before Laser came to live with us, Cora fell down the steps because lost her balance. She now is able to go everywhere with Laser to give her stability. Prior to Laser, Cora was taking more than \$1,400 each month in anti-seizure medication paid for by the HUSKY insurance plan. She has now reduced her dosage for a cost savings to HUSKY of \$7,200 a year. In addition, she no longer needs mental health services, physical and occupational therapy. In short, Laser has made a dramatic difference in Cora's life. I feel like I have my daughter back.

Without the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, none of this would have happened. I had no one who understood the importance of having a therapy animal. No one who was willing to fight for me and my daughter. Please fund the Connecticut Fair Housing Center so that they can continue to assist people like me.