

Testimony of Deneen Duncan

My name is Deneen Duncan, I live in Hamden CT, with my two daughters and my grandbaby who was just born. I'm married, but me and my husband are separated. I have financial difficulty trying to keep a roof over the heads of me and my girls. I work two jobs to pay my rent. One is nursing, the other is as a concierge at an apartment building. I come to Hartford today to speak on behalf of legal aid. I find legal aid was very helpful to me, in my need, when I had a crisis. My crisis was: getting ready to be put out. If it hadn't been for legal aid, I would be on the street today.

My landlord was very cruel and nasty. He had his own laws. That is one of the reasons why I feel that we need legal aid, because if I did not go to legal aid I would have never known my rights as a tenant. I know there are a lot of people in the community that are worse off than me, that need legal aid's help for whatever problems they encounter. Legal aid is one of the best things going in our community, and if the funding is cut for legal aid, we won't have anyone to speak for us and be our advocate.

I have been a client at New Haven Legal Assistance a number of times. One of the reasons why I support this cause is because of my situation. My landlord tried to evict me with no grounds. He said I didn't pay my rent for June and July, but my rent was

paid a month in advance. When I tried to call him and talk to him about it, he cursed me out, and talked to me like I was a piece of trash. I have been a tenant of his for almost 9 years, and I am a very good tenant. For him to put me through what he did was unbearable, I wasn't able to cope, I didn't know what was going to happen. My daughter was in the hospital having my grandson, my husband abandoned me, and left me with the rent to pay on my own. I didn't know where else to turn to. That's when I met Amy at New Haven Legal Assistance. If it wasn't for Amy, helping me out, I would be in the street today. But she represented me in court, and got this squared away with the other attorney. The landlord really owed me money, because he put my name on the water and sewer bill without my consent. He also had me paying for water and sewer for his son, who lived in an apartment in the garage at the back of the house. Amy, at legal aid, helped me square away things, and put everything in perspective. She told me it was illegal for the landlord to make me pay the water and sewer bill for his son, and I should get compensated for the money that I put out of my pocket. We resolved the case so that I will get to stay in my house for a few more months, until I get into public housing (I'm on the top of the waiting list). And I got 3 months rent free, to pay me back for the work I've done taking care of the house, and the illegal water and sewer bill that I paid for his son.

In closing, I hope that you do not cut the funding for legal aid, because this is something that we really need in our community.