Testimony of Ellison Findly

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. My name is Ellison Findly. I requested help from the Connecticut Fair Housing Center in 2008. I had co-signed a lease for my daughter who is a person with a disability. Unfortunately, after almost three years of living on her own, my daughter's condition worsened and her doctor determined it was too dangerous for her to live by herself. So she had to return home to live with me. We asked the landlord to let us out of the lease two months early as a reasonable accommodation of my daughter's disability. He told us it was ok.

My daughter moved out, but to my surprise and dismay, two months later the landlord sent us a demand for the balance of the rent due on the lease, advertising fees and cleaning costs. He claimed that he had not agreed to let us out of the lease early. He demanded payment for cleaning the apartment even though we had left it in good condition, as well as the cost of painting it. He kept the security deposit. When we asked for receipts for these costs he refused to provide them. The landlord was very abusive to me over the phone.

I am a well-educate professional. I thought I could handle this on my own. I contacted the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities and filed a pro se complaint. The process was very difficult. I had no one to advocate for me. The landlord and his attorney tried to bully me. I became very intimidated and frustrated. When the Commission tried to conciliate the complaint, the only offer on the table from the landlord involved me paying thousands of dollars to him! In desperation, I agreed to pay him for some of his unsubstantiated charges; but he turned it down, demanding more.

I contacted the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. The Center immediately began advocating for me. The landlord and his lawyer could not bully me any longer. The Center attempted to fairly resolve the matter with the defendant, who refused to negotiate in good faith. The Center made it very clear that I would not be paying him anything and that they would advocate for me in Court.

It has been such a relief to have someone taking my side. The Connecticut Fair Housing Center plays an important and unique role in protecting individuals from housing discrimination. It is not enough for people in Connecticut to have access to courts or commissions. They need dedicated advocates to represent them in the process. Please fund the Connecticut Fair Housing Center so that they can continue to assist people like me.