



# CONNECTICUT LEGAL SERVICES

A PRIVATE NONPROFIT CORPORATION

872 MAIN STREET P.O. BOX 258 WILLIMANTIC, CT 06226-258

TELEPHONE (860) 456-1761 EXT. 115 OR 1-800-413-7796 (CLIENT TOLL-FREE LINE)

FAX (860) 456-7420

E-MAIL SBERGERT@CONNLEGLALSERVICES.ORG

SHIRLEY BERGERT  
DIRECTOR OF  
PUBLIC BENEFITS TASK FORCE

ANNE LOUISE BLANCHARD  
LITIGATION DIRECTOR

CATHERINE CUSHMAN  
CHERYL DIANE FEUERMAN  
BET GAILOR  
JOELEN J. GATES  
REBECCA LOOS  
SAMUEL T.D. NEVES, JR.  
ROYAL STARK  
WENDY W. WANCHAK  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

CAROLE MASTERS  
VOLUNTEER ATTORNEY

LAUREL J. FREEMAN  
PARALEGAL

THOMAS W. CRATTY, JR.  
VOLUNTEER PARALEGAL

LUZ OSUBA  
HEROILDA RIOS  
LEGAL ASSISTANTS

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE  
62 WASHINGTON STREET  
MIDDLETOWN, CT 06457  
(860) 344-0447

THOMAS D. GOLDBERG  
BOARD CHAIR

STEVEN D. EPPLER-EPSTEIN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

#### LAW OFFICES

211 STATE STREET  
BRIDGEPORT, CT 06604

16 MAIN STREET  
NEW BRITAIN, CT 06051

153 WILLIAMS STREET  
NEW LONDON, CT 06320

20 SUMMER STREET  
STAMFORD, CT 06901

85 CENTRAL AVENUE  
WATERBURY, CT 06702

872 MAIN STREET  
WILLIMANTIC, CT 06226

#### SATELLITE OFFICES

5 COLONY STREET  
MERIDEN, CT 06451

62 WASHINGTON STREET  
MIDDLETOWN, CT 06457

98 SOUTH MAIN STREET  
SOUTH NORWALK, CT 06854

564 PROSPECT STREET  
TORRINGTON, CT 06790

29 NAEK ROAD, SUITE 5A  
ROCKVILLE, CT 06066

## Testimony of Shirley Bergert<sup>1</sup> Before the Energy & Technology Committee Regarding House Bill #6403

### An Act Concerning Utility Termination for Households with a Member Less Than Twenty-Four Months Old March 8, 2011

Connecticut Legal Services serves low income households in Connecticut, many with young children, providing legal advice and assistance in civil matters, including the loss of utility service. These are our vulnerable neighbors at greatest risk in affording and maintaining necessary utility and energy services.

**Recommended action: Adopt**  
Consider extending the shut-off prohibition  
year around.

**The proposed bill extends the prohibition regarding utility terminations during the winter moratorium (November 1 to May 1) as a collection tactic of households with children under the age of two years. It recognizes the special vulnerabilities of infants when necessary utility service is at risk. It is particularly dangerous for young children who may be ill. Adopting this provision will not preclude utilities from utilizing other approaches to collection of utility bills.**

There are special vulnerabilities which should be taken into account in public policy when infants and toddlers are in a home. Eliminating utility service terminations in these situations can literally be life-saving.

- Infants and toddlers are more vulnerable to hyper- and hypothermia. The winter moratorium bill was adopted by the legislature after a baby froze to death. Babies can also suffer from high levels of heat.
- Infants dependent on formula need sanitary conditions and appropriate food storage to safely eat.
- Infants and toddlers have immature immune systems, making them more vulnerable to illness in households with inadequate heat or cooling, where food cannot be safely stored or prepared or sanitary conditions cannot be maintained.
- Where an infant or toddler is ill or recovering from illness, s/he is at potentially grievous risk if utility service is not maintained. Contacts at Children's Hospital have seen cases where children cannot be safely discharged because of a lack of necessary utility service.

<sup>1</sup> Member of the Low Income Energy Advisory Board, Energy Conservation Management Board, Fuel Oil Conservation Board, and the Advisory Board for the Institute for Sustainable Energy.

