

**TESTIMONY OF ROBERT A. ROBBINS
IN SUPPORT OF FUNDING FOR THE
CONNECTICUT FAIR HOUSING CENTER**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is Robert A. Robbins. I want to thank you for funding the Connecticut Fair Housing Center in the past and to ask you to continue funding them.

I am a 74 year old veteran and am legally blind. In addition, I have diabetes and as a result, suffer from neuropathy in my feet, which causes me to lose my balance. I am currently living in housing owned by the Connecticut Institute for the Blind and subsidized by HUD. I first signed a lease in 2005 and have been living there since that time. I like my current living arrangement, am familiar with its layout, which provides for my special needs, and I know the neighborhood well.

Under the terms of my most recent lease my portion of the rent is \$166 and HUD's portion of the rent is \$213 per month. From 2006 through 2009, I recertified my voucher each year at the beginning of July. In each of those years, someone from CT Institute for the Blind would call me 3 to 4 months in advance to allow me time to prepare the necessary paper work. They would then visit me at my home with the documents necessary for recertification and explain the documents and have me sign them. In 2010, no one from CT Institute for the Blind visited me to complete my recertification. No one from CT Institute for the Blind called me or contacted my case worker or attorney regarding recertification.

Instead, on September 14, 2010, CT Institute for the Blind demanded that I pay the full amount of the rent without the subsidy, because it claimed my rental subsidy had been

terminated by HUD. Despite this, I paid my portion of the monthly rent in June, July, August and September 2010. I have always paid my rent on time, and have never missed a payment. On September 24, 2010, CT Institute for the Blind sent me another letter stating that I had failed to recertify. They claim to have sent me 3 more letters, but I did not receive any letters from them after the first one. Next, the Institute for the Blind began eviction proceedings against me claiming that I owed them rent.

I am now represented by Greg Kirschner at the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. Mr. Kirschner told me that HUD rules require landlords give oral notice of recertification if they rent to people who are sight impaired like me. To protect me from eviction and to stop the Institute for the Blind from terminating my subsidy, Mr. Kirschner filed a lawsuit in federal court. They have asked the Court to keep me in my apartment and to give me back my subsidy. In addition, they have asked the Institute for the Blind to go back to notifying me orally of the need to recertify and to give all notices about my tenancy both orally and in writing.

If the Connecticut Fair Housing Center had not agreed to represent me in this, I am afraid that I would be homeless and on the street or forced to go into a nursing home. I do not know how I would have looked for and found another apartment. I hope that you will continue to fund the Connecticut Fair Housing Center so that they can continue to fight for people like me.