

Testimony of Keysha Simmons  
In Support of Funding for Legal Services  
Appropriations Committee – February 22, 2012

Legal services was there for me when I needed it.

I went to legal aid because my daughter was sexually assaulted, and her therapist recommended I call New Haven Legal Assistance because of the problems we were facing. Not only were they there for me, but also personally; they listened and they understood. Even the receptionist, just walking into the building, made me feel better: she knew my life was rough, and her small compliments made all the difference. There are a lot of poor people in the world, and we really need the help, and legal aid is there for people who have nothing and need legal help but can't afford it.

I needed help because I needed to move to a different part of the state. A predator who lived across the street from us had sexually assaulted my six year old daughter. My daughter was so scared and anxious, she would no longer play outside. She would worry about seeing him when we went to the grocery store, or about being taunted by his children in school. So I knew I had to move away from Hamden. I wanted to move to another part of the state. But Section 8 wouldn't let me move, because I owed them some back money. Even though I was paying them on my repayment plan every month, they would not let me move out of Hamden until I had paid all the money back. I was stuck.

So I went to legal aid, and they helped me find the financial and legal way out. My attorney went through my records to see how and why I owed this money. Then she got in touch with an agency that paid off the rest of what I owed, so that Section 8 would let me move.

In the process of moving, my landlord turned on me and tried to evict me, and legal aid helped me through that too, and represented me in the eviction case. And they helped me move out of that part of the state. I no longer live in Hamden, I am miles away. Now my daughter and I don't have to worry about seeing them in the grocery store, and my daughter doesn't have to worry about going to school.

I'm really glad legal aid was there to help me; and I hope you can give them more money, so they'll always be there to help other people too.