

Testimony of Dawn Kardulis
March 10, 2014 – Judiciary Committee
In favor of S.B. 31 and continued legal services funding

My name is Dawn Kardulis, and I am here today to ask you to continue funding legal services.

I was in an abusive marriage and financially, could not afford to get out. My children were being failed by the education system, and I did not have the expertise to advocate for them properly or effectively. Those are both personal issues but you have to understand the law to get change. For example, I have a talented son who has a serious reading disability. Since 4th grade had made slow to no progress. By the time he was 18, he was reading at a 2nd grade level. Because the lawyer understood the special education laws, she knew exactly what to ask for and what the standards were. My son was then given special reading instruction outside of the high school. He is now 21, up to a 6th grade level, and reading independently. He went from being afraid to read even street signs and menus. Now he's confident and knows he can read. He no longer carries that shame. It's given him the confidence to propose and set up a dance program for young children at Hartford Public Library.

I could not have turned this situation around on my own, and I could not afford a private attorney. Legal Aid approached me holistically. The family lawyer sent me to the education lawyer. If not for Greater Hartford Legal Aid, our family would have been trapped, potentially unsafe, and my children would have no real future without literacy. Please continue to fund legal services – they help so many families like mine.

Thank you.