Testimony of Rachael Davis in support of S.B. 31, An Act Concerning Continued Delivery of Legal Services to the Poor, March 10, 2014 Judiciary Committee Hearing

Hello. My name is Rachael Davis and I am the Supportive Housing and Outreach Program Dir. at Friendship Service Center of New Britain, Inc. I support the Governor's bill S.B.31, because it will eliminate the 2012 bill's "sunset" provision and move desperately needed funding to support legal aid staff and services.

Part of the Friendship Center's mission is to provide direct service to the poor and needy of Central Connecticut. Our clients do not have the financial means to obtain private legal counsel and as a social service agency we **depend** on legal services lawyers to help our clients in crisis situations.

Agency staff frequently refers families and individuals to legal services for assistance in matters regarding tenant's rights, immigration, child support, unfair employment practices and representation through the process of acquiring Social Security disability benefits.

Over and over again, I have sought and continue to seek the guidance and counsel of Legal Services lawyers to help my clients. In each of the above categories, these dedicated lawyers have helped many of my clients resolve and/or obtain restitution given their specific circumstances and need. There are not enough legal services lawyers to represent all the people who need help, so increased funding is desperately needed.

It is without equivocation that Legal Services lawyers provide high quality, invaluable services to people who otherwise cannot afford private attorneys. Now, more than ever, is the time for our state government to eliminate the "sunset" provision and provide urgently needing funding. Legal services lawyers do important work for the New Britain community and throughout the state. If their services are cut, the people our agency serves will be more vulnerable to experience homelessness, abuse, exploitation and discrimination because they won't be able to obtain the legal services they need and deserve.