

Testimony of Eileen M. Healy, in support of S.B. 31, An Act
Concerning Continued Delivery of Legal Services to the Poor
Judicial Hearing, March 10, 2014

My name is Eileen Healy. I live in Woodbury. I am the Chairperson of the State Independent Living Council, a Governor appointed body that is charged with statewide planning for independent living services for people with disabilities. I am also the Executive Director of Independence Northwest, an independent living center serving northwestern CT. I am writing in support of S.B. 31, An Act Concerning Continued Delivery of Legal Services to the Poor.

People with disabilities comprise a disproportionate number of the poor. Not only are they discriminated against because of their disabilities, they also experience discrimination based on their other characteristics such as race, age, and sexual orientation, etc. People with disabilities encounter obstacles to employment, education, housing, health care and basic needs, and are frequently subjected to abuse and exploitation. Connecticut Legal Services is the go to resource for these consumers and many others. Without the legal representation that Connecticut Legal Services provides most of these consumers will suffer and the state will experience increased expenses in court, shelter and medical costs, among others.

The staff of Independence Northwest rely on and collaborate with Connecticut Legal Services. Their attorneys and expertise are critical resources that ensures that our clientele achieve and maintain independent living in our communities.

I urge you to support S.B. 31 as proposed by the Governor. Currently Connecticut Legal Services is forced to turn away consumers because the need far outweighs the available resources. The state must continue to ensure that Connecticut Legal Services has the funding to protect and defend the rights and interests of our most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for your time,

Eileen M. Healy