



**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
February 27, 2015**

HB 6824: An Act Concerning the State Budget

**Submitted by Lashawn Dyson
New Homeowner through Community Renewal Team**

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Lashawn Dyson, a single dad who went from homeless to homeowner thanks to a few different programs offered by the Community Renewal Team. I came here to support the special funding that lets CRT case managers work with you, and help you find the resources to meet your goals. This funding is called H.S.I., or the Human Services Infrastructure. That's not a very exciting name. But it allows CRT to do some very exciting things – like helping me to buy a three-family house here in Hartford, where I moved early this month with my daughter.

CRT calls their wrap-around case management the Steps to Success. And in my case, that really describes what happened.

I came over to CRT to join the Fatherhood program, when I first got custody of my daughter. I'll be honest, I didn't know much about being a parent. Even with the help of my mom and grandmother, I felt like I could use some more support. So I got involved in the CRT Fatherhood program, which is one of the things that H.S.I. funding covers.

Then I also signed up for some parenting classes called PEP, or People Empowering People, over at the Generations campus. Mostly that group was grandparents who had gotten custody of their grandkids – that's who lives at that campus – but they made me feel welcome. Once again, this program is covered by H.S.I.

Around that time, I found out that I wasn't going to be able to stay with my mom any longer. She has Section 8 housing, and she could have gotten evicted for keeping me and my daughter with her. Even though I was working as a cook, it was more like part-time and I couldn't afford my own place yet. We were looking at being homeless.

But then the Fatherhood coordinator referred me to CRT's Supportive Housing program, which helps you pay for an apartment while you save up for your own place. For most people, that means getting your own apartment – but I had other ideas. I wanted to get a house with a few apartments, so my daughter and I could live in one and then rent out the others.



That's when I heard about a program that literally seemed too good to be true. It's called the IDA, or Individualized Development Account. For every dollar that you save, this program matches with two more, until you have put in \$1,500 and they have given you \$3,000. You can use that for a house, business, education or car.

But you get more than money from the IDA. First you take 12 hours of Financial Fitness instruction, just to get in. And then every month, you go to a class on something you'll need to reach your goal. Since I was buying a house, my classes prepared me for owning a home. Working with a realtor, choosing a bank, taking out insurance, managing the property, and a lot more. By the time I had saved up the money, I had gone to about 30 different classes – all of them taught by people who are paid with H.S.I. funding.

So the Fatherhood Program, the PEP class, the Steps to Success case management and the whole Money Management team – all these things that helped me and my family – they're all gone if the state decides to eliminate H.S.I. funding.

I'm a determined guy. I work as a cook at Trinity College, I have a barber's license and CRT paid for me to get an IT Health Care certificate. I want to make a good living and take care of my daughter. But sometimes a person needs some help to meet their goals. That's when they should be able to turn to a place like CRT.

I'm here with my eight year old daughter Nevaeh, to ask you not to cut out the heart of what CRT can do for the community. There are so many of us who need the kind of "hand up" that CRT can offer, but only if you keep the funding at the current levels.

Community Renewal Team, Inc.

555 Windsor Street, Hartford, CT 06120

Testimony From:

Lashawn Dyson, CRT IDA Homeowner

For more information:

Nancy Pappas, Communication Officer
860-560-5689 or pappasn@crtct.org