



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

HB 6824: An Act Concerning the State Budget

**Submitted by Linda Dzwonchyk
Former Resident, East Hartford Family Shelter**

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

My name is Linda Dzwonchyk, I am currently living in Ellington. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak tonight on behalf of the state funding that's known as H.S.I. , which supports Community Action Agencies like the Community Renewal Team. I know from personal experience that it's incredibly important to fund organizations like CRT. You can never predict when you will need a safety net!

Recently I spent four months in CRT's East Hartford Family Shelter. Believe me, I never thought I would find myself in a homeless shelter. But emergencies can arise when a hard-working person like myself finds herself without a job, without a home, and doesn't know where to turn

In my case, I was living in West Hartford, working as a book keeper for a man who was also my landlord. The rent came directly out of my paycheck every two weeks. But he laid me off, and then gave me just a week to clear out of the apartment. I probably could have gone to Housing Court, but he was being incredibly nasty, so all I wanted to do was get out!

At first I went to a shelter in Manchester, and started looking for work. But I hit the time limit there, and spent some time sleeping in my car. I was serious about looking for a job, even when I didn't have a roof over my head. I applied and went out on interviews, no matter where I had slept that night.

Before too long, I heard that a bed was available at the CRT shelter in East Hartford. At about the same time, I found a job doing data entry – so every day I would leave the shelter first thing in the morning, drive up to Enfield for my job, and then come back late in the evening. At first it was part time, then it grew to be full time but seasonal.

I started saving toward an apartment that I was going to share with a friend. I even gave her a portion of the security deposit and our first month's rent, but then we had a falling out. Unfortunately, she kept the money, so my savings were lost.

At that point, I was really broken up. I was nearly at the end of my stay in this shelter, and I felt like I was back where I started. But CRT helped me review my options and it looked like I could manage an apartment on my own. That sounded like a more secure idea.



My Case Manager helped me apply for assistance with the security deposit and the first month's rent. Once I knew I had that, I could begin searching for an apartment. I found one that was affordable and close to my job.

On December 16, 2014 I moved into my own apartment again. It felt so good to be furnishing my own place. Donations from the Shelter helped with some household items, and family helped out as well.

Now I'm back on my feet. Our company is closed every January and February, but I go back to work next Monday. Since I knew I'd be laid off for those two months, I had to use my savings and unemployment to pay my rent for the first few months.

Maybe I'm not what you think of as a "typical" homeless woman. Widowed, professional, living in the suburbs. But groups like CRT have our backs – wherever we come from. They help give the people of this area the help we need to get back on track.

Staff at the East Hartford Shelter – like so many other CRT programs – are paid out of the H.S.I. funding. Please don't cut off the resources that this organization depends upon. Restore H.S.I. funding, so that CRT can be there for people like me.

Community Renewal Team, Inc.

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Testimony From:

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