



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

HB 6824: An Act Concerning the State Budget

**Submitted by Sonia Ramos
Supporting HSI for Community Renewal Team**

My name is Sonia Ramos, and I am now living in Hartford. I am here to strongly support HSI, which is the funding that lets the Community Renewal Team do wonderful things for people who have no place else to go.

I want to tell you about how I came to walk into the CRT office, and what they did to help me. My kids and I came up from Virginia to get away from the most horrible physical abuse. I don't even want to describe it, but I was badly beaten many times, by my baby's daddy. And my kids were watching, and they were really traumatized.

So we got some help to get out of Virginia and come up here to Connecticut. We took four buses, it took us two days and a night. We stayed with this woman for a while, she really was a good friend. But then she said 'you have to go.'

So I called around and found this really low cost hotel, up here off Market Street. I put all my money together and I had enough to stay for two nights, but I just didn't have money for a third night. I kept on calling the 2-1-1 hot line, and they said there were no beds available at any family shelters. It was December, and it was cold. But I didn't know what to try next.

I am talking with the person at the front desk at the hotel, telling them what was going on. I said, 'Do you know where I can go for help?' And she said, walk back toward town, maybe three blocks, and I'd see a building with a big sign. She told me that the words on the building were something about 'community.' And she said to me, 'They will help you there.'

So when I walked into CRT, I was literally walking – with my three kids – from a motel up the street. We didn't have warm clothes, and we hadn't had much to eat. I walked in and said "I need help, I don't have anywhere to go and I am homeless." But an amazing thing happened that day. The people at CRT, they gave me the hand, they didn't give me their back.

They sat me down and we talked for maybe almost four hours. They found something for us to eat in the Food Pantry, and they put a jacket on my son – I think it belonged to the boyfriend of one of the staff members, she found it in her car.



They welcomed me, they found me some help and they made me feel that I'm a real person. Like I mattered, and like my kids mattered. I cried because at that moment I finally let myself relax enough to admit that I was scared. They told me that I shouldn't be scared, that they would help me figure things out. And they did.

First, they told me where I could find space in a shelter that helps families. They gave me bus tickets to get there, and told me to call when I got settled there.

Then they started helping me to find an apartment we could afford. With my kids, we have some income from Social Security and Disability. But I really didn't know where to look to find a nice place. With CRT help, we got a brand new apartment in North Hartford, and then they helped me with the security deposit.

Then Carmen, she's my case worker, she got my kids enrolled in school. She helped me get food, and then look for furniture. She made sure I was signed up for health insurance, so I could get started again with mental health services. I'm back on medication for depression and anxiety.

But the best thing is, she really encouraged me to keep me going. She believed in me and she gave me a hug when I needed it. Someday I would like to be in Carmen's chair. I hope to work with people who have been through what I went through.

God brought CRT and Carmen into my life. But I want to help make sure that it's there for other people who need it. When someone else walks through that door, will the CRT walk-in office be there? It's only possible if they keep the funding they need, the HSI. Please don't close that door to other people who need this help.

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Testimony From:

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