



**TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT FAIR HOUSING CENTER
IN SUPPORT OF RESTORED FUNDING FOR THE
CONNECTICUT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT**

My name is Erin Kemple and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center (hereinafter “the Center”), a state-wide non-profit organization that is dedicated to ensuring that all of Connecticut’s citizens have access to the housing of their choice. I want to thank the Appropriations Committee, Senator Bye and Representative Walker for giving me the chance to submit this written testimony.

I submit this written testimony in support of the restoration of funding for the Connecticut Legal Rights Project (hereinafter “CLRP”) from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services budget. The Center has a long-standing collaborative relationship with CLRP. Over the years we have referred many cases to them and value the expertise the CLRP brings in cases involving individuals who suffer from psychiatric disabilities. It is because of CLRP’s expertise in the area of mental health and housing law that the Center defers to their ability to respond immediately to issues facing these clients.

We recently worked with CLRP on a case of a man with significant psychological disabilities who was facing termination of his Section 8 voucher from a housing authority. This man was terminated without being afforded his due process right to a hearing to challenge the reasons for his termination. We were able to collect information about the case and contacted the housing authority. Because the housing authority failed to respond to our letters we were faced with a situation requiring immediate legal action. CLRP’s office was able to file an action

in Federal Court to stop the termination and the housing authority reinstated this man's housing voucher. Without CLRP's immediate intervention and experience with landlord-tenant law, this man would have faced homelessness, a serious deterioration of his functioning and very likely would have had to be institutionalized.

Individuals with mental health impairments need the assistance of organizations like CLRP to ensure that their rights are not violated. The work CLRP does involves the intersection of many complex areas of law including the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, the Connecticut Patients' Bill of Rights, landlord-tenant law, the Fair Housing Act and more. CLRP's work protects the rights of the most vulnerable members of our communities so that they may receive the treatment, assistance and services they are entitled to under the law. Without CLRP's assistance many people would face homelessness and institutionalization along with the loss of their independence and dignity.

The Center fully supports and greatly appreciates the work of CLRP and hopes the legislature will provide CLRP with the funding they need to continue to provide legal assistance to individuals suffering from psychiatric impairments.