

Testimony of Juan Bonilla
Appropriations Committee
February 18, 2016

Good evening Senators and Representatives of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Juan Bonilla and I've lived in Meriden for fifteen years. I got CLRP's number through Rushford. I was telling them my situation in group and my counselor suggested I call them. I was going through a situation with the apartment I was living in at the time. The place had faulty and dangerous electrical wiring, a bedbug infestation, and the plumbing was constantly backing up. I told my landlord several times about the many problems and asked him to fix them, but he ignored me over and over again. I even contacted City Hall and the Fire Marshall and the Building Inspector came out and both wrote reports of multiple violations, and still, my landlord ignored their orders to repair the violations.

Finally, I got in touch with CLRP and spoke with a lawyer named Katrina. She took action immediately. She contacted my landlord, and told him that if he didn't fix the violations, we were going to take him to court. Katrina filed an action that allowed me to pay my rent to the court and kept the money out of my landlord's hands until he made the repairs. When the landlord was served with papers, he tried to evict me in retaliation. My lawyer got the first eviction dismissed, but my landlord just filed another one right after. It felt like a nightmare that would never end. I just wanted to leave and find a new place by that point, but I had no money to move out, and it was difficult to find a new landlord who would me with my limited income and a pending eviction on my record. My lawyer worked hard and negotiated for many days. Eventually, she got the landlord to agree to immediately withdraw the second eviction he had filed against me and to pay me \$1,600 in cash in exchange for me moving out.

With the money from the agreement, I was able to move into a more affordable apartment that is well maintained. The building is quiet and I get along with my new landlord. I would not have been able to afford a new place without the with an eviction on my record. Without CLRP's representation, I would be living on the streets today. Instead of being homeless, I have a place to call home. Thanks to a referral from CLRP, I also have a peer bridger from FOR-U who has become a good friend and who helps me with paperwork, listens to me, gives me advice and is a source of support.

I don't think that the funding for CLRP should be cut. They helped me out with so much- if not for them, the landlord would never have been held accountable and I would have no money or shelter. Without CLRP, people like me will be in trouble- we cannot afford to pay lawyers out of pocket. Please do not turn your backs on those of us who need help the most.

Thank you listening to me.