

To: Members of the CT Appropriations Committee
From: Dorothy M. Grady, 42 Cornwall Drive, Coventry, CT 06238 dmgrady@aol.com
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Good evening and thank you for offering me the opportunity to tell you about why I am hoping that CT Legal Services receives full funding in the budget.

I am Dorothy Grady and live in Coventry, CT. From 1979 to 2007 I was the Human Services Administrator for the Town of Coventry. Then I went to work for Congressman Joe Courtney as a caseworker in the area of Social Security, healthcare programs, social services programs, and services to the elderly. I am now retired from my paid employment but continue to serve my community as the Chair of the Coventry Democratic Town Committee and as a member of the Housing committee. In all of my work years, I don't think there was a month when I didn't refer clients to CT Legal Services or call Legal Services myself for advice. This is a vital direct service for people and I believe that because of the services, CT saves money.

Many of our most vulnerable citizens have tenuous housing situations. They often run into difficulties and when they do they don't know that there is help for them. If they tell someone in their church, their social services office, their soup kitchen or if they call their Congressman, they are most likely referred to CT Legal Services. CLS explains the eviction process and often can work out an arrangement with the landlord even before going to court. Helping residents to stay in permanent housing keeps them off the streets and shelters. The legal advice protects our citizens.

CT Legal Services is an important resource for all social services agencies. The pamphlets and on line information helps each of us sort through how to help someone in crisis. I know that tenant/landlord issues, understanding the heating assistance programs, and navigating the programs available through the Social Security Administration and the CT Department of Social Services are difficult for most of us and for the poor, for those with mental health issues and for those alone in our society, CT Legal Services is a lifeline.

I would like to tell you about one very difficult case I had some time ago. Mrs. C lived in housing for seniors. She had no family and was a very private woman. The town was notified of the impending eviction for non payment of rent. Piecing together her story, I learned that she had not paid her utility bills and her electric usage indicated that she was not turning on her heat. She had not responded to the forms to renew her Medicaid. It took of team of helpers including the local police, the CT Department of Social Services,, Protective Services, the Judge of Probate and CT Legal Services to arrange mental health services, naming a conservator, and keeping her in her apartment. She needed each service to help her during her crisis and to quickly return to her independent living situation, This "independence" was with the help of several resources. If CT Legal Services was not there to represent her, where would she have gone? To a nursing home at the expense of the state? Keeping her safe in her apartment certainly saved the state several thousand dollars each month.

Social Security for the disabled is a wonderful benefit but gathering together the "case" is not easy. Many disabled people are denied initially but as their health deteriorates, they are often granted through the appeal process and many times with the help of an attorney. CT Legal Services provides the help to so many who have no ability to make the calls to get their medical information and to keep track of their appointments and records. The process can take two years or more. While waiting for this benefit, SAGA is available but this program does not provide enough money for housing. Therefore, some disabled people become transient making their application process even more difficult. It is very often their difficult cases go to CT Legal Services. They provide the legal expertise to protect our citizens.

I have so many stories of people that were helped through CT Legal Services and all of them involve our citizens who cannot go to a private attorney and yet need help that only the legal

system can provide. We need to support this service. Just as we try to meet the needs of sick people through assistance with access to healthcare, we need to continue to help people with access to the legal help they require. I urge you to remember the homeless, those with mental health problems, and the elderly who need this agency to keep themselves safe in our cities and towns. Thank you for your time.