

**Joi McKay**  
**February 19, 2016**  
**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**In Support of**  
**Funding for Legal Aid**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Kane, Representative Ziobron and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Joi McKay.

I am currently applying for unemployment and I am raising my 2 year old son. I was a victim of domestic violence when I received help from CT Legal Services. When my life changed in 2015, I had to leave a beautiful home in Rocky Hill to stay in a shelter for five weeks with my son. He was only 15 months old at the time, but I was afraid to stay in my own home and feared for my life. Being in a shelter was a very humbling experience, but through that experience I got counseling and was able to encourage other women to fight and seek out help for their situations. I was in a place where I needed help and an advocate to speak up for me to help me fight for what was right. I filed for divorce and there was no turning back. I was turned down for help from another agency and just when I was going to give up and had come to the conclusion that I was going to have to fight alone, my Christian values helped me and I knew I wasn't going to be alone - God was going to see me through this.

That's when I received a call that saved my life. It was a call from the CT Legal Services office. I was so grateful that they took my case. I met with my Attorney Martin Wheeler and I began to tell him everything. He was attentive, caring and very hands on with my case. He knew the laws and informed me about my rights.

I am so grateful for the services that I received through CT Legal Services. I didn't feel like just another case. I felt like I mattered and my little boy mattered. We Had A Voice. I'm sure if I didn't get the help from my attorney I would have lost my case and I would have been a mother fighting to raise her son in a household filled with violence.

Please don't take the funding from this great organization. It's very needed in the community. They make things possible and they help many people in need. They are a great service for the community.

Joi Nicole McKay