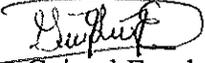


**TESTIMONY OF GEISSEL ESCOBAR IN SUPPORT OF RESTORING FUNDING TO  
THE PROBATE COURT SYSTEM**

My name is Geissel Escobar. I am 16 years old and live in Bridgeport, Connecticut. I submit this testimony to ask you that funding to the Probate courts be restored. I am grateful for the fact that the Probate court was available when I needed it. My father has never been in my life in any meaningful way. Because of this, my mother had to leave me with my grandmother in Honduras while she worked to support me. By the time I turned 13, my grandmother was unable to provide for my care and sent me to live with my mother in Bridgeport. My mother applied to become my sole legal guardian in Probate court and also requested that the court make special findings which have allowed me to petition the United States Customs and Immigration Services to stay indefinitely in the United States with her. I ask that you restore funding to the Probate courts so that other children like me can have a permanent and safe home environment.

Thank you,

  
Geissel Escobar

**Testimony of Wilmar Beletzuy**

My Name is Wilmar Beletzuy, 18 years old and a resident of Stamford, Connecticut. I am writing today in support of the probate court system and ask that you consider restoring funding to ensure that others like me have the protection of the courts. I am originally from Guatemala and was abandoned by my father at an early age. By the time I turned 16 I had no one in Guatemala to care for me. The only people that could care for me lived in Stamford. Once in Stamford I was in need of a guardian that could care and protect me. The probate court was the place where I could go and ask to have a family member appointed as my guardian. I am a tenth grade student at West Hill High School and plan on becoming a mechanic when I graduate. The probate court is necessary for other kids like me. Restoring funding to the probate court will ensure that they have access to its protection when they need it.

Respectfully,

  
Wilmar Beletzuy

**TESTIMONY OF CARLOS SIPAC IN SUPPORT OF THE RESTORATION OF  
GENERAL FUND SUPPORT FOR THE PROBATE COURT SYSTEM**

February 18, 2016

My name is Carlos Sipac. I am 14 years old and reside in Norwalk, Connecticut. I submit this testimony to ask that you consider restoring general fund support to the Probate courts. I received the protection of the Probate court system as a child who was abandoned by both of my parents. My aunt, who took me into her care applied in the Probate court to become my guardian.

This is my story: my father has never taken care of me. In fact, I do not know where he is. My mother who also lives in Norwalk was in a relationship with a man that forced me out of their home because of their continuing conflict. With nowhere else to go, I turned to my aunt who has been caring for me for the past two years. Even though she works full time our money is limited. Because of the opportunity to access the Probate court without charge she was able to apply to become my guardian. Because the Probate court awarded her guardianship, I am now able to enjoy a safe and loving home. I am attending the 9<sup>th</sup> grade at a Connecticut Technical High School and plan to become an electrician. I ask that you think of how taking away funding from the Probate court system can have a negative impact on children like me.

Thank you,

Carlos Sipac

Carlos Sipac

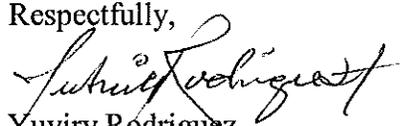
**TESTIMONY OF YUVIRY RODRIGUEZ IN SUPPORT OF RESTORING FUNDING  
TO THE PROBATE COURT SYSTEM**

My name is Yuviry Rodriguez a resident of Bridgeport, Connecticut for the past 31 years. I am a Pastor at the Church of the Nazarene, Metro District, Long Island, New York. I testify in support of public state funding being restored to the Probate courts. My experience with the Probate court system came as a result of me assuming the care of Gerson, a young man who had been abandoned and neglected by his father. I met Gerson for the first time when I transported him and his uncle to an appointment. I observed Gerson on the back of my car and he seemed very sad, quiet and withdrawn. Although that first contact was very brief, Gerson's presentation left a meaningful impression in me. I saw that he was a child in need of help and guidance. For that reason, I felt compelled to reach out to him in order to help and I asked his uncle if Gerson could accompany me to Church.

Over the course of a few weeks, Gerson began to confide in me and shared details about his background and living situation including the fact that his mother had died from cancer and that his father and stepmother did not want him in their home. His uncle was also unable to care for him. For all these reasons, I took Gerson into my care and I submitted an application in Probate court to become his legal guardian. The application was granted and Gerson now has a stable home environment.

Because of my limited income I had to ask the Probate court to waive the application fee which I believe now is \$225.00. As I understand it, the Probate court has been deprived of funds that would allow families like mine to take the immediate necessary steps to protect children like Gerson. It may seem like little money, but the reality is that waiving the fees in our case was essential to expedite my application to take Gerson under my care. I urge you to consider restoring the general fund to the Probate courts to make sure that poor families continue to have access to core services.

Respectfully,

  
Yuviry Rodriguez

2/17/16