

Wilnelia Bianchi

March 18, 2016

Testimony before the Judiciary Committee

IN FAVOR OF SB 428

Re Funding for Legal Aid

My name is Wilnelia Bianchi. I live in Hartford, and am raising four children by myself. I work part-time at night doing building maintenance and cleaning.

I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 428, *AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING OF LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE POOR.*

I came to Greater Hartford Legal Aid because my son has a serious learning disability and was struggling in school. He was so frustrated by not being able to learn in his class, he hated to go to school. He would bang his head till he gave himself concussions. He would cry, or hide in the building – anything to avoid going into his classroom. I had a disabilities advocate at first, but she sent me to legal aid because they know the law. The school doesn't play around when a lawyer comes to a PPT meeting.

My GHLA attorney helped me by investigating my son's program, and then getting him the services he needed. For example, the attorney discovered that my son was not given proper speech and language services for months, and that he was making no progress in reading or math. She helped convince the school to send him in a more appropriate program, where he is now happy and actually learning.

We had to fight more than a few years to get this help. If I didn't have a legal aid lawyer, my son would still be suffering emotionally and physically, still banging his head, and still not learning.

Please support increased legal aid funding because people like me need someone knowledgeable to fight for us.