Jesseri Estrada
March 18, 2016
Testimony before the Judiciary Committee
Re
Legal Aid Funding Bill

Members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Jesseri Estrada. I work part-time at Payless Shoe Store, and I am raising 2 children with my husband in New Haven.

When I first found legal services, it was like a sign from above. I was having a big problem with a landlord. Then, I got a flyer from my child's school in New Haven about legal aid services in the school. It said they could help with housing. I thought, I have to give this a shot.

I went to the school, and met with a lawyer. I told her about my problem. My husband and I had given our entire life savings to a landlord. It was all the money we had. At the time we had to move, so we gave the landlord our money. But in the end, my

family ended up not needing to move into the apartment. But the landlord wouldn't give us our money back.

I felt like a fish out of water. We had invested everything in this apartment. We started to fall behind on the rent. It was hard to pay the electricity and the bills. I was starting to become afraid I wouldn't be able to provide a roof over my kids. We didn't have money anymore to go back to Puerto Rico, or anywhere else.

The lawyer wrote a letter to my landlord. And in about a week, I got back all my money—almost $5,000 dollars.

It may not seem like a lot of money, but it was everything to us. If I didn't have legal aid, I would still be in this situation. I didn't know what to do.

Please don't cut funding for legal aid. I wonder how many other people might be in the same situation. Many other people must be in much worse situations.