

Martha Mendez

March 18, 2016

**Testimony before the Judiciary Committee
IN FAVOR OF SB 428
Re Funding for Legal Aid**

My name is Martha Mendez. I was a client at Greater Hartford Legal Aid for domestic violence. They helped me in both family and housing cases. Today, I am testifying in support of Legal Aid so that they can continue to receive the funding that they need to continue their great work.

I met my ex-husband eight years ago and we fell in love. We decided to live together and everything seemed great in the beginning. Then the abuse started. He would often lose his temper and express his anger towards me. He would call me degrading names and made me feel like I was nobody. I started to have panic attacks and suffer from depression. One time, he even poured hot coffee on my face and my arms, and I was critically burned. I had to call the police, and he was arrested and was jailed for 16 days. After he was released, he convinced me that he would change and I gave him a second chance.

For about two years, I thought that he did change and we would go to church together. But the abuse started again, and this time it was worse. He was drunk everyday and tried to hit me if I was disobedient. He would tell me that he would kill me if I try to divorce him or meet another man. Finally, I couldn't take it anymore, and I called the police when he tried to hit me. I contacted Legal Aid to get myself out from this abusive relationship. The people at Legal Aid treated me with respect and dignity. They gave me hope and strength to move on with my life. The lawyers there helped me to obtain restraining order against my husband. With the assistance of Legal Aid, I also filed for divorce. Then my husband made a false report to the Housing Authority that I was living with my mother and daughter in order to terminate my Section 8 housing assistance. Again, Legal Aid was there to help me, and I was able to retain my Section 8 Voucher.

Legal Aid was always there for me, and they always fought hard for me. Most of all, I knew that I could trust them because they weren't doing it for the money. They always did what was best for me, and they were always there to help me with whatever I needed. I don't really know what I would have done without them. That's why I ask you to please support funding to Legal Aid so that they can continue to represent domestic violence victims like me. Thank you.