

Testimony of Daixy Pinto in support of S.B. 428, AAC Funding for Legal Aid to the Poor

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Daixy Pinto, and I am a former client of CT Legal Services. I came to this hearing today to give you my testimony in support of SB 428, an Act Concerning Funding for Legal Aid to the Poor. I want to tell you about the help that I received from CT Legal Services, Incorporated.

Since 2011, CT Legal Services, Inc., has continued to help my son and me to achieve our lifelong dream to encounter and experience our new lives in the United States. Unfortunately, I was in an abusive relationship with my husband at that time, and CT Legal Services helped me to begin the process of becoming a legal resident of the United States.

This was not an easy process. First, Ct Legal Services helped me fill out an I 360 form, which is a Petition for Special Immigrant status through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Next, they helped me file as a Self-Petitioning Spouse of Abusive U.S. Citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident. When all of that paperwork was approved, CT Legal Services helped me file the I 485, the Application to Register for Permanent Resident or Adjust Status. And if this wasn't enough, the Agency finally helped me to get my divorce.

When I had to temporarily move to Waterbury because of flooding in my Watertown apartment, CT Legal Services counseled me regarding the laws which let me keep my son, Joel, in his current school. This was going to be a temporary move for us to Waterbury, and I knew that Joel needed to have a consistent school experience. In addition to this, I felt that Joel needed to focus on his schoolwork. Because CT Legal Services helped us to become residents, both of us had a huge opportunity to have a better life.

In addition to this, CT Legal Services intervened for me to Naugatuck Valley Community College. I was in desperate need of financial aid. CT Legal Services explained my situation to the college so that they would understand my issue. Because I had been an abused person, the VAWA Law protected me, and the

college realized that I did qualify for financial aid because of that law. At the college, I first took English classes and then business classes. With my newly acquired skills, I was able to apply for more jobs. I found that my job interviews were more successful, and I became more valuable in the job market.

I am now working part time for the city of Waterbury and hoping to get hired full time soon. Joel attends Sacred Heart High School on scholarship.

Ladies and gentlemen, I lost my strength, self-esteem, and the ability to make my own decisions. If it wasn't for CT Legal Services, my son and I could be homeless and in a dire situation. For these reasons it is extremely important for you to increase funds for this agency, so that CT Legal Services, Inc., can continue to support people like me. That organization took me from a place of darkness to a world of light. Are there any questions?

Thank you for your time this afternoon.