

March 3, 2021

Dear Reps. McGee and Smith, Sens. Lopes and Anwar, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Dione Dwyer. I am a resident of Bridgeport; I am testifying in support of Connecticut H.B. 6531 - An Act Concerning the Right to Counsel in Eviction Proceedings and H.B. 6528 - An Act Concerning the Sealing of Eviction Records.

I went through court stipulations at the verge of eviction a few times since living here. I felt worn out about the whole process knowing exactly what was going to happen. And even though I knew what was going to happen I dreaded it because I was on my own. The judge said, "You do realize you are entitled to due process; you can have a lawyer?". In response, I felt defeated at the beginning as the process had already taken so much out of me and I couldn't afford the time to explore the process on my own. I felt like they were going to add more court fees to my financial obligation if I continued on. In trying to respond to the judge, I had to pay what they said I owed - without the opportunity to modify or reduce this amount, an appeal that could be covered by a lawyer. Ultimately, paying the amount housing was demanding meant reaching into funds I had invested in retirement accounts and turning them over. I had set aside money and it broke me that I had to turn it over to them, but I had kids and knew it would not help me if we were without a home for our family. And that is why I gave it to them and didn't fight back. I felt like nobody would tell me different than what I was experiencing and without knowledge of the process, I thought any lawyer would be partial to the housing authority.

The housing authority is quick to evict and there is a waiting list so they can fill the space but don't they worry about where the evicted people go? The people they evict are families. These families who are evicted still need a place to live and will need resources from the government (our tax dollars will still be needed for this issue). If we don't help families stay in their homes, we will need to help them find a new home. This is not an effective way to deal with issues of poverty.

I strongly support H.B. 6531 and H.B. 6528 and urge you to favorably vote these bills out of the Housing Committee.

Sincerely,

Dione Dwyer
Bridgeport