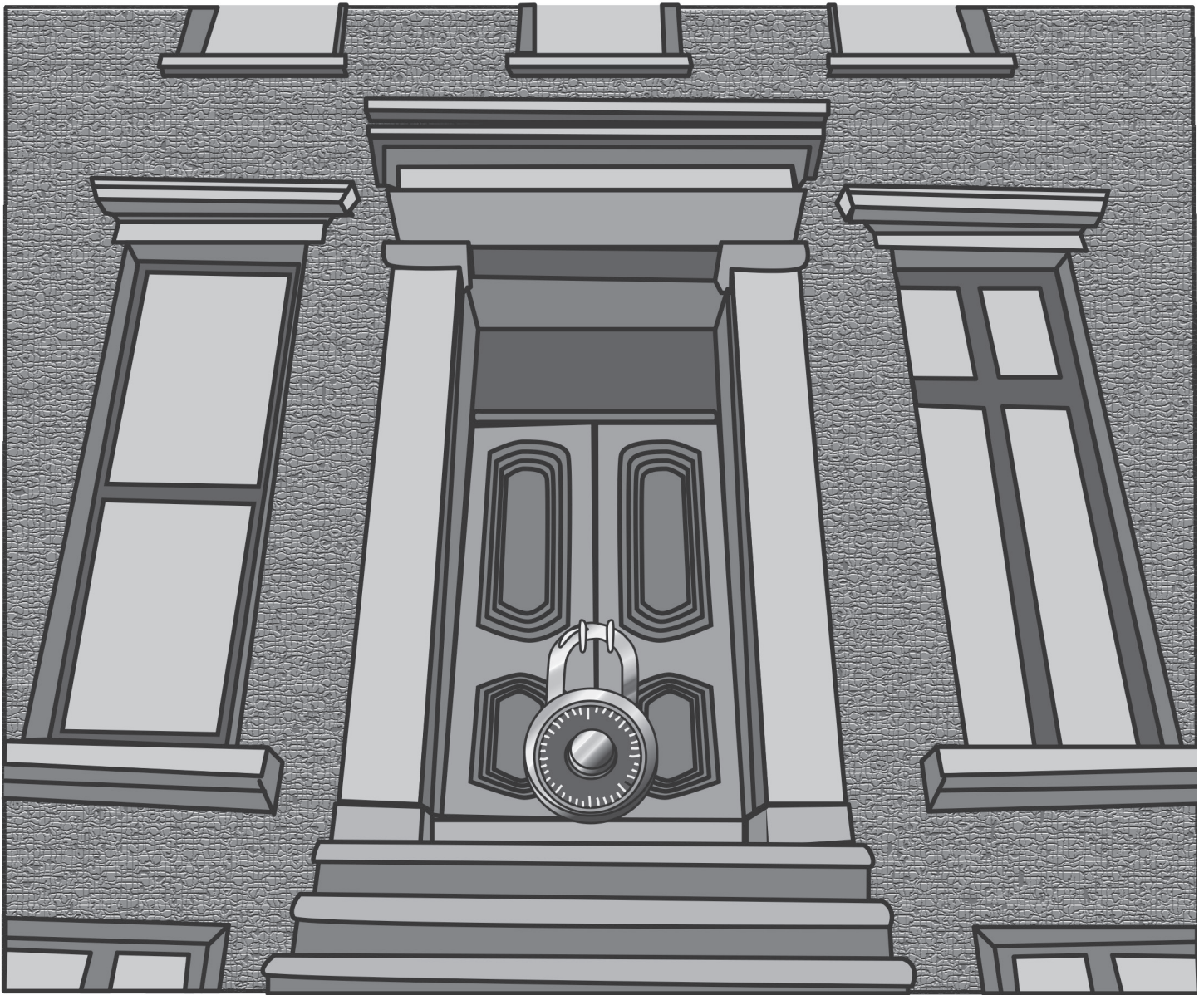


# CONNECTICUT LEGAL SERVICES INC.

ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2018





## CLS Saves Family from Homelessness

Toni\*, a single mom with a young child, works as a home health aide but lost her job because of budget cuts. She applied for unemployment benefits but couldn't keep up with the rent while she was waiting to receive them. She eventually returned to work, but her landlord began an eviction action for the missed rent payments. The eviction also jeopardized her rental assistance under the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. Toni sought help from Connecticut Legal Services.

Her CLS attorney intervened with the Housing Authority on Toni's behalf to make sure she didn't lose her voucher because of the eviction. CLS referred Toni to an assistance program that helped pay her back rent, but she still had a balance for court costs and fees that her lease requires when an eviction action is brought against a tenant. Toni entered into an agreement to pay the balance. During the agreement payment period, any missed payments or failure to re-certify could mean immediate eviction, loss of her voucher, and immediate homelessness.

The building Toni lives in is eligible for low income tax credits through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program, which gives tax credits to landlords who provide affordable housing in higher market rent areas. Both the HCV and the tax credit program require that Toni engage in separate certification procedures each year.

During the agreement, Toni missed an appointment with her landlord to complete the annual re-certification for tax credits. She had completed her annual re-certification with the HCV Program and did not know that there was a difference. Toni thought she had done everything required. The landlord, however, filed a notice with the court stating that Toni had not complied with the requirements of her agreement. Toni's CLS attorney objected, and a court hearing was scheduled. CLS was able to renegotiate the agreement with the landlord and assist Toni in completing the re-certification process.

With CLS's help, Toni completed both re-certifications, paid all the money owed, and was reinstated as a tenant in good standing. She is no longer in jeopardy of losing her housing or her housing subsidy.

\*Names and identifying information in CLS client stories were changed to protect client confidentiality.

# Service Area, Offices, and Staff

Connecticut Legal Services is a private, not-for-profit law firm dedicated to improving the lives of low-income people by providing access to justice.

In the CLS service area—all of Connecticut except the Greater Hartford and New Haven areas—more than 200,000 people are financially eligible for services (2010 census).

CLS has six full-service offices, two satellite offices, and one administrative office.

On June 30, 2018, the CLS staff consisted of

49.55 FTE lawyers

2.00 FTE paralegals

11.80 FTE legal assistants

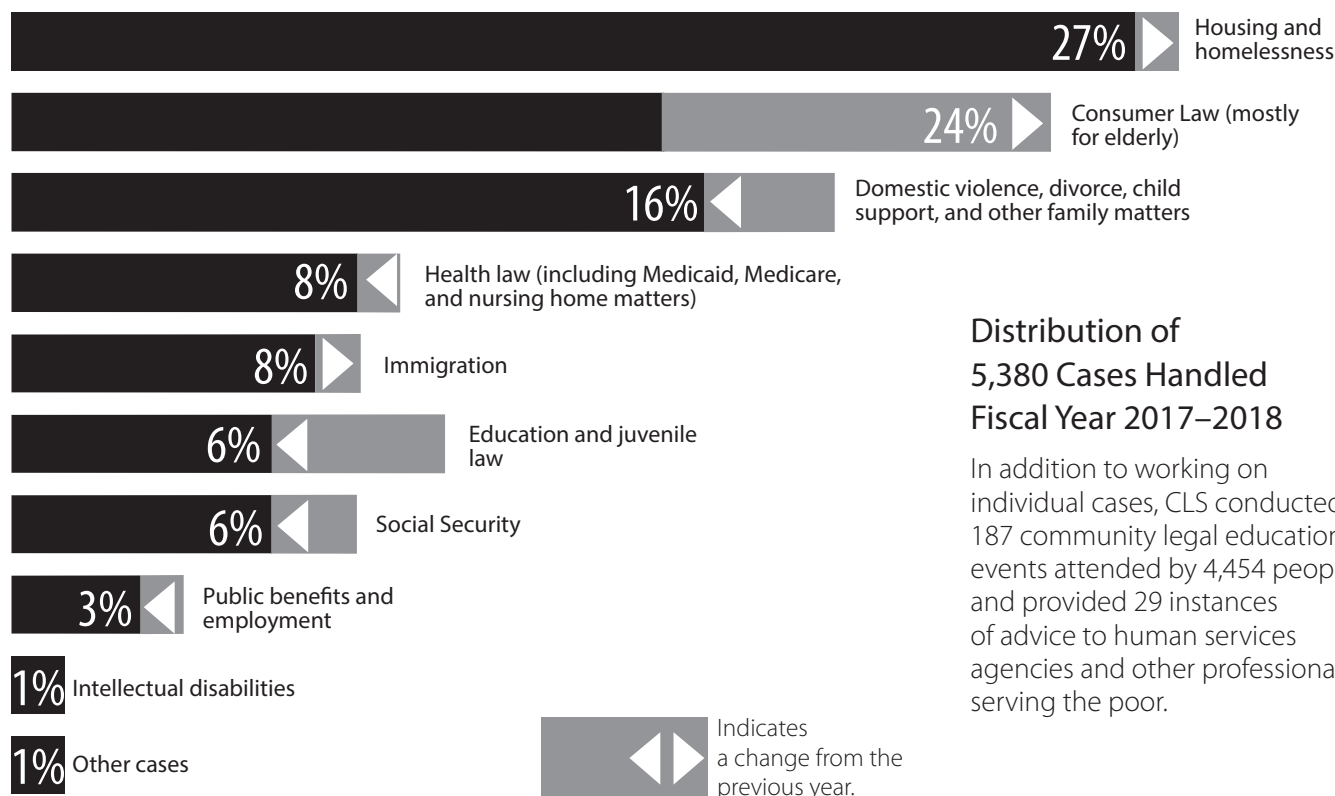
.55 FTE child welfare advocates

9.00 FTE administrative staff.



## Distribution of Cases

In 2017–2018, Connecticut Legal Services received approximately 15,750 requests for service. We responded by opening 3,407 new cases for legal representation and counseling. We also worked on 1,973 cases opened in previous years. CLS services in these 5,380 cases benefited approximately 12,400 household members.



### Distribution of 5,380 Cases Handled Fiscal Year 2017–2018

In addition to working on individual cases, CLS conducted 187 community legal education events attended by 4,454 people and provided 29 instances of advice to human services agencies and other professionals serving the poor.



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Deputy Director

Anne Louise Blanchard  
Litigation and Advocacy Director

Keith Boyce  
Financial Director

Astrid Lebron  
Director of Development

Whit Freer  
Information Technology Administrator

## CLS Reunites Mother and Child

Sandra went to court on her own to ask for help getting her baby back from the child's father. He had forcibly taken the five-month-old from the home they shared with Sandra's parents and refused to tell her where the baby was. The court ordered that the father give Sandra access to their child and referred her to Connecticut Legal Services for help. The court also ordered that Sandra and the baby's father appear in court ten days later. Sandra's CLS attorney attempted to serve the court orders, but the baby's father had left Connecticut and entered a shelter in New York State. Although CLS faxed the paperwork to him at the shelter, he did not show up in court. He also had a pending criminal matter, and Sandra's CLS attorney had him served again when he appeared for his criminal court case. As the court was rendering its final decision, he appeared. At that time, Sandra's CLS attorney was able to talk to the father and work out an agreement giving Sandra custody. The baby's father could visit the child only in Connecticut with Sandra present. The court accepted the agreement and ordered the baby's father to return the child to Sandra by 7 p.m. that evening. He did not. Instead, he returned to New York and got a judge there to grant him custody. Sandra went to New York and showed the court the orders she had gotten in Connecticut. At that time, the New York court ordered that the baby be returned to Sandra immediately. After one month of court appearances, she finally has her baby back.



# Letter from Executive Director and Board Chair

Dear Friends,

Thank you for supporting Connecticut Legal Services throughout this past year. What a difference you made! CLS is resilient. We continue to thrive, despite the many challenges inherent in an economy that yields too few resources to meet the critical needs of our clients. CLS staff remains dedicated to ensuring that our clients have the tools they need to resolve their crises. We increase our effectiveness by working closely with many of you. Your support, whether you are a funder, collaborator, volunteer, or staff member (or sometimes a combination of the above), makes it possible for us to reach those who need our services most. Together, we help thousands of people

- access life-sustaining benefits
- find safety from violence
- obtain critical medical care
- receive safe and appropriate education
- live in safe, decent, and affordable housing
- lead lives free from unnecessary restraints due to disabilities
- stop illegal debt harassment
- obtain representation when facing deportation or family separation
- avoid the downward spiral that so often occurs when even just one of the above cannot be appropriately resolved.

We are grateful for your support and look forward to many more years of collaboration.

Sincerely,



*Deborah  
Witkin*

Deborah R. Witkin  
Executive Director



*Kevin J. Rasch*

Kevin J. Rasch  
Board Chair

# Financial Supporters and Other Income Sources for 2017–2018

## Government-Based Grants

Agency on Aging, Senior Resources (Eastern Connecticut)	\$	31,033
Agency on Aging, Southwestern Connecticut Area		58,778
Agency on Aging, Western Connecticut Area		58,735
City of Middletown		10,000
Community Development Block Grant Program—City of Waterbury		9,852
Community Development Block Grant Program—Town of Fairfield		3,993
Park City Communities		54,715
State of Connecticut Court Support Services Division—Family Matters Training Program		10,000
State of Connecticut Department of Aging		94,194
State of Connecticut Department of Developmental Services		73,787
State of Connecticut Department of Social Services		699,156
State of Connecticut Judicial Branch		26,191
State of Connecticut Long Term Care Ombudsman Program		1,324
State of Connecticut Office of the Chief Public Defender		50,000
State of Connecticut Office of Victim Services		1,590,176
Town of Ashford		1,000
Town of Coventry		925
Town of Ellington		2,200
Town of Groton		7,643
Town of Mansfield		6,500
Town of Vernon		2,000
<b>Total Government-Based Grants</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,792,202</b>

## Private Grants

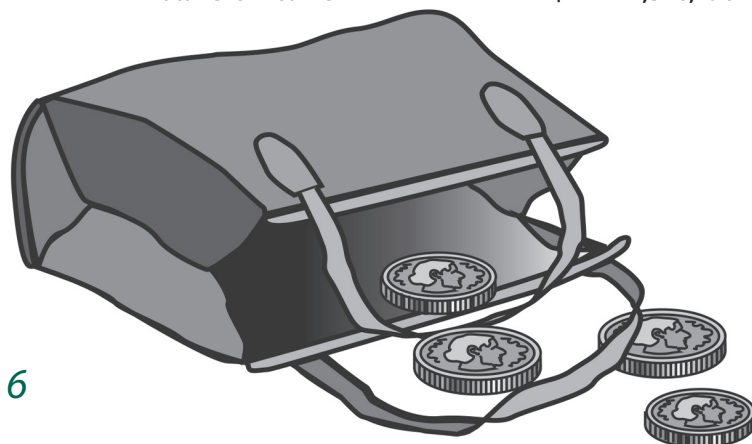
Community Foundation of Fairfield County	\$	75,000
Connecticut Bar Foundation (Interest on Lawyer's Trust Account)		972,827
Connecticut Bar Foundation (Court Fees Grant-in-Aid)		6,483,410
Connecticut Bar Foundation (Judicial Branch Grant-in-Aid)		707,358
Connecticut Health Foundation		37,500
Equal Justice Works Trafficking Victims Protection Act Fellow		3,018
Financial Distress Research Project		184,773
Meriden Foundation		10,000
James H. Napier Foundation		3,500
Jeffrey P. Ossen Family Foundation		225,000
St. John's Community Foundation		4,000
Tow Foundation, Inc.		100,000
Vera Institute of Justice, Inc.		47,411
United Way, Central and Northeastern Connecticut		15,000
United Way, Greater Waterbury		16,600
United Way, Meriden and Wallingford		21,500
United Way, Northwest Connecticut		4,812
United Way, Southeastern Connecticut		29,944
United Way, Southington		3,600
United Way, West Central Connecticut		3,420
<b>Total Private Grants</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>8,948,673</b>

## Donations and Other Income

Program Fees	\$	290,971
Campaign for Justice		224,642
Donated Goods and Services		233,372
United Way Donor Designations		10,892
Investment Income		11,773
Other Income		13,965
<b>Total Donations and Other Income</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>785,615</b>
<b>Total CLS Income</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>12,526,490</b>

## CLS Helps Elderly Woman Obtain State Assistance

Esther is an elderly immigrant who had been sponsored by her adult son 17 years earlier. She has limited English proficiency and no income and couldn't meet her basic needs. When Esther attempted to seek state assistance, she was denied because she had not provided financial information from her sponsor. A social worker with Protected Services for the Elderly became aware of Esther's situation and contacted Connecticut Legal Services for help. Her son refused to help his mother or provide any financial information to the Department of Social Services (DSS). Esther's CLS attorney informed Esther of an exception to the rules if her sponsor refused to cooperate, which DSS had not done. Esther's CLS advocates applied for and secured cash assistance, medical assistance, and food stamps for Esther after successfully arguing that the exception applied to her case.



# Statements of Financial Position—June 30, 2018, and June 30, 2017

ASSETS	June 30, 2018	June 30, 2017	LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	June 30, 2018	June 30, 2017
<b>Current Assets</b>			<b>Liabilities</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents—Operating Funds	\$2,400,044	\$2,124,200	Accrued Pension Liability	\$3,645,074	\$4,711,537
Cash in Escrow—Client Funds	19,479	1,051	Accounts Payable	223,237	323,696
Certificates of Deposit	749,430	749,743	Accrued Expenses	221,165	99,198
Receivables			Refundable Advances	585,670	376,485
Grants and Contracts Receivable	416,002	500,172	Accrued Annual Leave	472,703	452,733
Promises to Give	1,588,908	1,488,625	Client Trust Deposits	19,479	1,051
Other Receivables	114,157	27,833	<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$5,167,328</b>	<b>\$5,964,700</b>
Prepaid Expenses	114,961	90,139	<b>Net Assets</b>		
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$5,402,981</b>	<b>\$4,981,763</b>	Unrestricted		
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			Undesignated—attributable to operations	578,890	607,042
Property and Equipment	\$ 823,807	810,607	Undesignated—attributable to pension liability	(1,430,802)	(2,616,277)
Building/Leasehold Improvements	1,099,098	1,149,380	Designated		
Total Fixed Assets Before Depreciation	\$1,922,905	\$1,959,987	Fixed Assets	798,095	853,010
Less Accumulated Depreciation	(1,124,810)	(1,106,977)	Total Unrestricted Net Assets	(53,817)	(1,156,225)
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>\$798,095</b>	<b>\$853,010</b>	Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	1,156,803	1,099,920
<b>Other Assets</b>			<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>1,102,986</b>	<b>(56,305)</b>
Security Deposits	\$69,238	\$73,622	<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$6,270,314</b>	<b>\$5,908,395</b>
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>\$69,238</b>	<b>\$73,622</b>			
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$6,270,314</b>	<b>\$5,908,395</b>			

## CLS Helps Family Find Safety from Abuse

In 2016, Tonya's husband physically assaulted her. Tonya had her husband arrested and was granted a protective order that extended to her children. Since 2016, her husband has had no contact with their children because he refused to pay for a supervised visitation program the court required. During this time, he also refused to help with any of the finances and paid a minimal amount of child support. Because she could not pay the household bills, Tonya was evicted.

At the end of 2018, Tonya came to Connecticut Legal Services for help finalizing her divorce. Her husband argued that he had already obtained a divorce in another country without notifying Tonya. Her CLS attorney argued that Connecticut should not recognize that divorce, if it had indeed occurred, because the couple had married and lived in the United States. The court agreed. Tonya's attorney secured a more reasonable child support amount and an additional alimony award, but Tonya's husband refused to pay anything more than he had been paying. Tonya's CLS attorney returned to court to inform the court of Tonya's husband's failure to comply with the order. The court enforced the order, advising Tonya's husband's attorney that his client could go to jail for his failure to comply with court orders. Tonya's CLS attorney secured Tonya's divorce and sole custody of the children. Tonya's former husband must participate in a supervised visitation program if he wants to see his children, and he must pay alimony and child support in the appropriate amounts.





# Connecticut Legal Services Campaign for Justice Donors

*July 1, 2017–  
June 30, 2018*

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## **CLS Helps Elderly Man Overcome Harassment**

Tom is an elderly man whose extremely limited income consists only of Social Security payments. He was getting phone calls and dunning letters from collection agencies and a law firm claiming that Tom owed them more than \$6,000. He contacted Connecticut Legal Services because he was scared. Tom's CLS attorney wrote cease and desist letters informing the creditors that they could not collect from Tom, even if the debt were actually his—and it was not. Under the Connecticut Credit Collection Act and the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, creditors cannot harass people who are judgment proof—Tom's Social Security could not be garnished. The letters had their desired effect, and Tom no longer lives in fear of harassment.





## CLS Helps Woman Change Her Life

Violet, a single parent, sublet a room in her apartment when she was 20. One day, the police came to Violet's apartment and told her they had received a tip that there were drugs in the apartment. They searched and found drugs in the sublet room. Violet had never used drugs and did not know that the person who was subletting the room kept drugs there. The renter refused to acknowledge ownership, and Violet, as the lessee of the apartment, was charged with felony drug possession. After her arrest and conviction, she was unable to find meaningful employment or pursue her dream of working in the medical profession. As time went by, Violet had children and did her best to find work wherever she could, but she was never able to fulfill her career dreams or pull herself and her family out of poverty. Violet turned to Connecticut Legal Services for help dealing with her criminal conviction. It took some time, but CLS helped Violet obtain a full criminal pardon. She now has no criminal record and can truthfully say she has no criminal convictions. Fifteen years after her arrest, Violet is completing her second year of college and intends to become a drug and alcohol counselor. Her oldest daughter, who was a toddler when her mother was arrested, will start college this fall.

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# Campaign for Justice continued

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## CLS Helps Elderly Woman Get Health Care Services She Needs

**Mary is in her late 90s and receives around-the-clock home health care services. She applied for Medicaid to cover the costs, and the Department of Social Services (DSS) said it would approve payment for services retroactive to her application date. DSS did not do so. Mary was billed \$19,500, and the home health care agency sought payment. Not knowing what else to do, Mary decided to execute a promissory note and mortgage deed to the agency as security for the debt. At that point, someone close to Mary contacted Connecticut Legal Services. Her CLS attorney was able to keep Mary from signing anything. Her attorney also filed a debt dispute letter under the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act and worked with the local area agency on aging to negotiate with DSS and the home health care agency's attorney to ensure that the state paid Mary's bill. To the relief of the family, DSS *did* pay, and Mary and her family were reimbursed for their out-of-pocket payments to the agency.**

Kimberly A. Jacobsen  
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### *In Memory of*

Roy F. Brown  
Attorney Peter L. Costas  
Frank Judge  
My brother Curt who  
always struggled and  
still had a good sense  
of humor  
Judge Thomas J.  
O'Sullivan  
Esther and Payton  
Thomas  
Rev. Henry K. Yordon

### *In Honor or Appreciation of*

Mary Berthelot  
Cohen and Wolf clients  
CLS 40th anniversary  
CLS Bridgeport Office  
Steven Eppler-Epstein  
Harold Geragosian's 90th  
birthday  
Elisabeth Miranowski's  
40th birthday  
The work of Josh Perry  
The work of Sydney  
Perry  
Jill Plancher  
Quinnipiac University  
School of Law  
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Faculty and Staff  
Claudine Siegel and all  
CLS staff  
Deborah Witkin

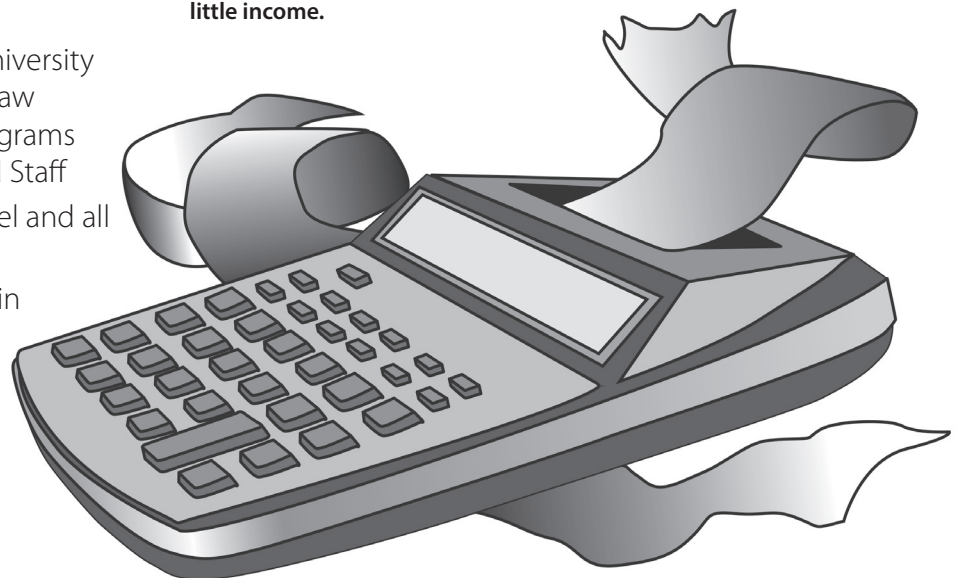
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### **CLS Helps Overcome Barrier to Housing**

**Patty, a Section 8 HCV Program tenant, came to Connecticut Legal Services for help with two problems. Patty's Section 8 worker had recalculated her rent, but it was more than Patty could afford. The worker insisted that the calculations were correct and that Patty's income had caused the rent increase. In addition, Patty's landlord constantly threatened her with eviction if she did not make additional side payments to him. Section 8 does not allow property owners to demand such side payments, but Patty was not aware of that. She had no place to go with her children, so she made the side payments. Her CLS attorney immediately reviewed Patty's income and the Section 8 calculations and found that Patty's monthly income was mistakenly listed as weekly income. The attorney informed Section 8 of the mistake and requested that Patty's income be recalculated correctly. Section 8 agreed. Patty's CLS attorney then wrote a letter to the landlord informing him that he could not extort side payments and requesting a return of the payments Patty had already made, noting that if he did not agree, further legal action would be taken. Patty's landlord, upon receipt of the letter, credited all the money that Patty had paid. The return of these funds made a significant difference to Patty, who has very little income.**



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