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**Testimony to the House Financial Services'
Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing, and Community Opportunity**

Starnica Rodgers

December 15, 2011

Good morning everyone, my name is Starnica Rodgers. I am 18 years old. I have lived in Chicago my whole life. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. It is a true honor.

Currently, I am a student at Truman College. I just finished my first semester and I received one A and two B's! I am also 8 months pregnant and I am expecting my baby boy next month. Don't worry, I checked with my Doctor and she said it was safe to fly here.

Right now, I am staying at a shelter for parenting teens on Chicago's north side. It is run by The Night Ministry. When I first got here, I was very nervous. I was worried about being in a new environment. But now I realize that everyone is here for the same reason: we are all homeless and alone. Since I have been here, I have found support from the girls here and the staff. They help me with my homework and found clothes for me to wear to school. And they are helping me find a more permanent place to live.

I have been homeless on and off my whole life. My Mom is a single mother with four kids and has worked minimum wage jobs her whole life. I remember watching my mother struggle to pay the rent and us having to go to a shelter when I was 5. I want my life to be better.

As I grew up, my Mom and I started getting into a lot of fights. She was verbally abusive to me – and sometimes physically abusive. By the time I was 16, I knew I had to leave for my own safety. So there I was: 16 and homeless.



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I went from house to house, staying for two or three days at other family members' houses, not knowing where I was going to end up. Throughout the struggles, I was dedicated to graduating high school no matter what. I worked with the McKinney-Vento counselor so I could get free transportation to get to school. I graduated this year and I am very proud of that accomplishment.

I'm in college now. I'm on the Drama Team and I was elected to the Student Senate. I have to graduate college no matter how hard the obstacles may be. With a college degree, I know that I will be able to get a good paying job with a guaranteed salary. My dream is to be a social worker to help people that are going through the same struggles that I have faced.

Right now, I'm working to get into a transitional housing program also run by The Night Ministry. The program receives federal HUD funding. But there are not enough housing programs in Chicago for people like me. Before I got into this program, I had to call over 25 different programs but they all were full or had a wait list.

I have had to struggle my whole life to find a place to call home. So I hope that you understand how important stable housing is to a young person. Without these programs, I know that I wouldn't be able to attend college. I would be too busy worrying about where I was going to stay every night.

Thank you for listening to my story and thank you for supporting the programs that are helping me. I hope that you will think about the 10,000 youth in Chicago who are homeless or the teens in your town who don't know where they are going to sleep tonight. Our country should give more money to programs that help homeless youth, so we can break the cycle of homelessness and become successful adults. Thank you.

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Financial Services

“TRUTH IN TESTIMONY” DISCLOSURE FORM

Clause 2(g) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives and the Rules of the Committee on Financial Services require the disclosure of the following information. A copy of this form should be attached to your written testimony.

1. Name:	2. Organization or organizations you are representing:
Starnica Rodgers	CAEH and The Night Ministry
3. Business Address and telephone number:	
4. Have <u>you</u> received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify?	5. Have any of the <u>organizations you are representing</u> received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
6. If you answered .yes. to either item 4 or 5, please list the source and amount of each grant or contract, and indicate whether the recipient of such grant was you or the organization(s) you are representing. You may list additional grants or contracts on additional sheets.	
See attached sheet.	
	
7. Signature:	

Please attach a copy of this form to your written testimony.

Federal Funding for Starnica Rodgers

Pell Grant to attend Truman College

- Awarded August 2011 – \$5,500

Federal Funding for The Night Ministry

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, Basic Center Program Grant (The Night Ministry's Open Door Shelter – Lakeview)

- 9/30/08 – 9/29/09 (\$100,000)
- 9/30/09 – 9/29/10 (\$100,000)
- 9/30/10 – 9/29/11 (\$100,000)
- 9/30/11 – 9/29/12 (\$100,000)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, Transitional Living Program Grant (Transitional Living Program at Open Door Shelter West Town)

- 9/30/08 – 9/29/09 (\$200,000)
- 9/30/09 – 9/29/10 (\$200,000)
- 9/30/10 – 9/29/11 (\$200,000)
- 9/30/11 – 9/29/12 (\$200,000)

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Community Planning and Development, Supportive Housing Program Grant (Transitional Living Program at Open Door Shelter West Town)

- 2/1/08 – 1/31/09 (\$141,391)
- 2/1/09 – 1/31/10 (\$141,391)
- 2/1/10 – 1/31/11 (\$141,391)
- 2/1/11 – 1/31/12 (\$141,391)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Population Affairs, Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs, Care Demonstration Project Grant (The Night Ministry's Response-Ability Pregnant and Parenting Program)

- 9/1/08 – 8/31/09 (\$350,000)
- 9/1/09 – 8/31/10 (\$350,000)
- 9/1/10 – 8/31/11 (\$350,000)