

Advocacy unlocks opportunity.
Help youth experiencing homelessness get a fresh start.

Dear [First Name],

Do you love a story with a happy ending? I do. That's why I want to tell you about Tanya.

Tanya and her baby were living in a homeless shelter when she met an attorney from Community Legal Services (CLS).

Growing up, Tanya had been in and out of the foster care system, in part because she was sexually assaulted when she was a child. When she was 17, Tanya had so little money that she could not even afford underwear, and was caught taking a pair from a store. She was issued a summary citation for retail theft, the most minor type of criminal offense in Pennsylvania. Because she did not have a reliable address, she never received the notice for court, and a bench warrant was issued. To make her life even harder, Tanya was also struggling with depression, anxiety, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of her childhood trauma.

Tanya was trapped by her multiple legal problems. Her bench warrant led to her being rejected from jobs that she was qualified for, so she could not afford housing. The longer she lived in a shelter, the more depressed she felt. Even though she was receiving mental health treatment, she was overwhelmed and struggling to get by. She applied for SSI disability benefits to help support her and her baby. But like so many qualified applicants, she was denied.

CLS assigned expert attorneys to tackle Tanya's legal problems holistically. We were able to get the bench warrant withdrawn and immediately petition for an expungement of Tanya's record. We also connected Tanya to a program that helps people who are experiencing homelessness to apply for SSI benefits on a fast-track.

Now that Tanya has stable income, she can move forward and access opportunities. She is eager to enroll in the Job Corps program so she can continue her education and find a meaningful career. **But we're not stopping there. We're changing the system.**

Shouldn't all youth have a chance to succeed? Philadelphia's young people face some of the highest rates of poverty, unemployment, and homelessness of any age group in the city. Black youth, youth with disabilities, and LBGTQ+ youth are even more likely to face homelessness, due to over-criminalization and other injustices. **However, you can right these wrongs and help youth who are experiencing homelessness.**

CLS promotes independence and opportunity for low-income Philadelphians, and has launched the Youth Justice Project to help young Philadelphians receive the tailored support they need to thrive. Because of our holistic approach to serving youth, people like Tanya have the opportunity to overcome

challenges and grow into stable, self-sufficient adults. We are also advocating for policy changes to solve the larger systemic problems that impact youth.

With your help, youth in Philadelphia can reach their full potential. We need your support to continue to break down barriers and give youth experiencing homelessness a fresh start.

[First Name], will you make a gift to CLS today?

We deeply appreciate your financial support, which changes the lives of youth who need legal assistance in order to move forward. Young people in Philadelphia can be the future, as long as we give them a chance.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Debby Freedman
Executive Director

PS: [First Name], you can change a life. Your contribution to CLS helps youth who are homeless have access to new opportunities. Please make a gift today!