

Witnesses to Hunger

Tamika

Tamika is twenty-six and the mother of two young children. She lives with her two children in one room in her mother's house because she can't afford to live anywhere else on her income. She is currently in school training as a medical assistant and she receives cash assistance and Food Stamps for her family. She and her children all have asthma, and while they are all insured through Medicaid Tamika is still not able to afford the equipment she needs to treat her asthma. Tamika pays her mother rent for her room and contributes Food Stamps to the house; she struggles to buy everything her children need with the remaining money.

The father of Tamika's daughter is an ex-offender who can't find a job. He is very involved in his daughter's life and helps Tamika financially with her children's needs, but Tamika knows that he is only able to provide financial support because he is still selling drugs. She is concerned about the limited opportunities that fathers have in this country, especially if they lack education or if they have a criminal record. She thinks that when fathers are only able to find minimum wage jobs, they are forced to give up on their responsibilities to their families, leaving single mothers like her struggling on Welfare.



Welfare won't give you money for YOU to get a machine, 'cause you still have to pay for the machine. They'll pay a part of it, a portion of it, but you have to pay the rest for adult machine. So, Melissa was wheezing really bad and she came all the way from 15th and Mason to come here to use my children's machine and she had to use this small mask because I can't afford to buy no big mask for me. 'Cause when I get sick and I'm

1



Witnesses to Hunger is a participatory study initiative of The Philadelphia GROW Project at Drexel University's School of Public Health. <http://publichealth.drexel.edu/GROW>
Funded by Claneil Foundation, Inc., PEW, and public/private donors like you.

© Copyright 2008 Witnesses to Hunger. All rights reserved. www.witnessestohunger.org

Witnesses to Hunger

wheezing I gotta do the same thing, hold this on my face, too. Welfare covers a little bit but you have to pay the rest, but how can you pay the rest if you don't have it?

I was having asthma attacks a few years ago; I was getting taking out in a ambulance every single month... And at that time I didn't have health insurance, so I couldn't even get my prescriptions filled because just one... one of the inhalers that I needed was eighty dollars and I didn't have it. They told me I can go to a free clinic and ask them can I get samples of the medicine because I didn't have it, but they didn't give it to me. So the outcome of that was I never did get the medicine, so I just kept going back and forth to the hospital.



Her dad... he doesn't have a job but he gets money. He doesn't have a job, but he takes care of his daughter. And I know what he does to do it... Like it's very hard in here, in America, to get a job if you have a criminal record, it's very hard... And half the men out here, you know, they used to making this fast money, so when you do give 'em a job and you payin' 'em minimum wage or \$7.30 or \$7.50 and they get their paycheck and it's only for a hundred-some odd dollars, they like, what? I can make like three times, twice as much in like ten minutes... No, I don't approve of it...because anything could happen, because if he has my daughter and he mad at somebody, somebody be mad and do somethin' to him while

he got my daughter...

Policy Issues

- Medicaid
- Housing
- Child support
- Employment opportunities



Witnesses to Hunger

For more information contact:

Mariana Chilton, PhD, MPH, Principal Investigator
215-762-6512, mmc33@drexel.edu

To make a contribution contact:

Colleen Jansen, Institutional Advancement
215-762-6484, Colleen.B.Jansen@drexel.edu

Mailing Address:

The Philadelphia GROW Project, *Witnesses to Hunger Initiative*
Drexel School of Public Health
1505 Race Street Bellet building
MS 1032
Philadelphia, PA 19102

