

**Testimony of
Ramon Compres
Mary's Center Participant**

Wednesday, April 21, 2010

11:00-12:00

COMMITTEE ON AGING AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

District of Columbia

City Council

Good morning. My name is Ramon Compres. I am originally from the Dominican Republic, but I've been living in the United States for the last 30 years.

When I learned about the budget cuts from OLA that will affect Mary's Center, I felt that I needed to come here today to tell my story and make you aware of the important work that Mary's Center does in the community for people like me, my wife, my children and all those I see every time I visit the Center. I have had diabetes for 27 years and, as you can imagine, it has been a very difficult battle for me. The lack of health insurance, the elevated costs of the treatments, and the health complications that come with this disease are just a few of the obstacles I have found during these years.

Mary's Center is my medical home and the place that has kept me alive and going. I have been a patient there since the Center opened the doors for adult males in 2004.

When someone asked me what I did before that, I responded: tried not to get sick. And it's true. I couldn't allow myself to get sick and I had to hold off any pain, headache, or strong cold because I couldn't afford to pay for that. I needed the money to pay for my diabetes treatment with private doctors.

Becoming a Mary's Center patient changed my life and reduced my past's daily stress. At Mary's Center, they helped me enroll into DC Health Care Alliance which is paying for my treatment and all my regular check-ups.

In the last 9 years, I have had 6 different surgeries. I only have less than one third of my colon. I also have problems with my intestines and my stomach, and I have high cholesterol and hypertension. I don't know how much of that has to do with my diabetes, but I do know that it does affect my health somehow.

Mary's Center takes care of all of these health problems with the most caring, dedicated and professional staff. They are always there for me and they are on top of everything that has to do with my health. Every time I come for my check ups, they make sure I get everything I need and that my prescription is on time at the pharmacy. Dr. Rollins, who is my provider, even calls me personally to give me the test results and through Mary's Center educational classes on diabetes, I have learned how to live with the disease and have a better life style.

I think I have learned well because I feel active and helpful to society. I couldn't be in better hands. I work at a restaurant in Washington, DC and I know I still have a lot to contribute to the community.

I can't imagine what people like me and like so many others who seek care at Mary's Center will do if we can't continue receiving the services for lack of funds. It is not just about one disease, but about our well-being.

I am here to advocate for Mary's Center's services and programs and I ask you to consider the budget cuts on behalf of thousands of families who need the Mary's Center services. Thank you!