

**Testimony of
Victor Reategui
Mary's Center Participant**

**April 21, 2010
11:00 – 12:00
COMMITTEE ON AGING AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
District of Columbia
City Council**

Good morning. It is an honor to be here representing Mary's Center today. My name is Victor Reategui. I am originally from Peru and I have lived here since 1980.

I have been fighting against addiction to drugs and alcohol for 40 years. I don't drink or smoke anymore, but I will consider myself a drug addict and alcoholic until the last day of my life because the damage will be there forever.

Mary's Center helped change my life and gave hope to my future. When I came to Mary's Center in August 2008, I was not drinking anymore but I was still smoking cigarettes and marijuana.

I learned about Mary's Center's services in the newspaper. I came for help and they opened their doors to me. I received help, support, and advice and I am proud to say that thanks to Mary's Center, I quit smoking on September 2, 2008, and two months later, I left marijuana on November 4 at 5:30 pm.

For many of you, the date and the time may not sound relevant- but for me, it is very significant since it's a huge challenge for a person who depended on these addictions for 4 decades.

I tried to stop drinking and smoking many times before but never succeeded. Mary's Center's staff made it easier for me. They were patient and gave me all the tools to make the decision to quit. They also gave me counseling and medications and showed me the consequences I would face if I didn't stop my addiction.

Smoking was the first thing I did when I woke up every morning. I knew it was bad and I knew I wanted to stop but I didn't have the courage to do it. I was spending more than \$10,000 - dollars-a year in cigarettes and marijuana and I was smoking 2 to 3 packs of cigarettes every day.

I was destroying my life and my wife's life through second-hand smoke which caused her to suffer as much as I did.

Today, 17 months later, I am a different person and human being. I can breathe a better air, I can exercise, and I can sleep in peace. I even have even learned to better use my money and soon I will be able to buy a car, which I couldn't in the past because I was afraid of driving drunk.

My health is in much better condition and Mary's Center continues taking care of me.

Decreasing funds to centers like Mary's Center is making the city sicker and weaker. I respectfully ask you to consider cutting the budget to programs that benefit the residents of the District of Columbia.

Thank you!