



**Testimony to the Committee on Human Services
On the Foster Youth Rights Amendment Act Of 2012**

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Good afternoon Councilmembers. Thank you for listening to my colleagues and me today. My name is Alaijza Moulden. I am 15 years of age and I attend Cesar Chavez Public Charter School for Public Policy Capitol Hill in Southeast, DC. I am not a part of the DC Foster Care System, but at the Young Women's Project I work with my peers to better the problems within the system. I am here today to testify in support of the Foster Youth Rights Amendment Act of 2012 that will hopefully be passed.

I am here today to support my peers. I would like them and others to know that they have someone to support them that is not in the system and that someone else cares. Many of the youth I work with at YWP said they didn't know their rights and were not getting access to the things they needed like weekly allowance, three meals a day, to be able to see their siblings twice a month, or to call meetings.

There are certain things that I cannot do for myself but my parents can do or help me do. Foster youth need someone or something that will help them get what they need.

I support the Foster Youth Rights Amendment Act of 2012 because it gives foster youth the same rights that regular kids have. I have access to a comfortable bed, clothes, 3 meals a day, to be able to see my siblings, and to have programs to prepare me for college. These are the things that mean the most to me. If I didn't have them, there would be no point in doing anything. It would make my life miserable.

I have three suggestions for implementing this bill.

First, I feel that foster youth should be entitled to receiving a detailed list of their rights upon entrance to the foster care system, especially since they are under someone else's care and that person may take advantage of the child.

Second, I want to make sure the bill is enforced to make sure that they are getting what they need. I suggest doing a survey with youth within a month after the bill is passed to see what rights they know, have access to, and use.



Third, youth will not have rights if they don't have programs to help them out with their rights. There should be more programs for youth in care who are aging out. The programs should be mandatory to start at 16 so that youth can stay busy, build their skills, learn how to budget and save, and get ready for life as adults.

Thank you for having me here today. I was glad to share my thoughts with you.