



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

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Hello Chairman Graham and other Council Members. My name is Breona Pulliam. Let me start by saying thank you for taking time out to listen to the YWP Foster Care Campaign Staff. I am 20 years old and have been in care since I was 15. I am here today to testify in support of the Foster Youth Employment Amendment Act of 2012.

I want to work with children. Someday I would like have my own child care center for the arts. I specialize in graphic design, and photography.

I've been involved with SYEP since the age of 14, which has been a very positive experience. For the past three summers I have worked at the same child care center, where I decided I wanted to work with children. This experience taught me patience, self discipline, and how to work with little kids, who take more time and attention. I began to take a leadership role by designing my own exercises and games for the children.

I started looking for jobs when I was 16. My first jobs were with SYEP. For the past three summers I worked at the same child care center. The staff at the Center taught me so much -- patience, self discipline, how to prepare you to work with little kids --and and they encouraged me to take leadership.

For the past two years, I've been focused on my own education at UDC. When I turned 20 in January the real world set in. I had to make a decision about what career I wanted to choose and how to act on it. I realized I had to start setting goals, first by getting a planner, then researching and identifying resources. I've applied for many child care jobs.

This is where the legislation could really help me. The 10 extra points helps me qualify for these jobs. It could really help me get a DCPS job with benefits where I could support myself. I especially like the five year window because it gives me more time to finish my education and get my credentials together. I am about to age out of the system and I will be on my own. I need to earn enough money to be stable. I have friends and distant family members I can fall back on if I really need them, but I want to be independent.

This bill could really help a lot of youth. Youth also need help preparing and applying for government jobs and a place that they can go to do applications -- like a center. Some youth don't have phones, and the center would be a place where they could make calls and send out email. Youth need people who can help them understand what government jobs are available and what kind of education they need. Transportation would also help. A lot of foster youth have trouble getting to interviews because they don't have money for transportation. Providing clothing vouchers would help many young people in the system who do not have clothes that they could wear to interviews and/or to work.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience and recommendations.