



**Testimony to the Committee on Human Services
For the Oversight Hearing on Child and Family Services Agency**

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Greetings members of City Council. My name is Dayar Brown and I am 17 years old. I am a DC foster youth and I have been in care for 11 years. I am currently living in a foster home with a very supportive foster mother. I am a senior at Accotink Academy and I am looking forward to graduating this year.

The issue I would like to bring to your attention today is regarding the educational opportunities for foster youth and the role of the Office of Youth Empowerment.

As a high school senior, education is really important to me because it is the necessary ingredient for success. My experience with OYE was very short due to the lack of help I was receiving. The first issue I had with OYE, before even entering their office, was that they did not answer the phone nor did they return my calls. I attended an OYE orientation session in October of 2010 and I continued to attend the weekly workshops for college prep until mid November of 2010. The first college prep class I attended started late, which left me with a negative impression of this office. I only attended five sessions at OYE because I found the classes to be unhelpful. I felt that my area of interest, attending a 4-year college, was not given much attention which was frustrating because they focus on the majority.

After doing research at Young Women Project and personal experiences, I discovered that the problem that we the youth are having with OYE is that they are receiving 1.4 million dollars to help youth with secondary education planning such as college prep, enrolling in trade schools, and finding employment. In 2009, OYE reported that out of 1200 older youth in foster care, they only served 35 youth with educational services. From this you can clearly see that OYE is not providing adequate resources to enough youth and as a result many youth are faced with homelessness and unemployment when they age out of care. How can CFSA continue to fund a program with no large outcomes but receive large amount of money? So where is tax payer money going if not to



educate the youth? Even the youth who are receiving assistance from the agency report that their funding from OYE is not administered on time.

Education is very important because it has been proven that those who have a college degree are more likely to succeed in life. When doing research at YWP, I discovered that the average person with a college degree earns an annual salary of \$47,000 whereas a person without a college education only makes \$27,000 a year.

To improve CFSA's education program, my recommendations are:

- CFSA needs to have very clear educational goals and expected outcomes.
- CFSA should keep track of the progress that youth make.
- OYE college prep classes should focus on preparing youth to enter four-year colleges and universities.

If OYE cannot meet these basic expectation, then we (YWP) propose that the education and employment funds be removed from CFSA and be given to a community organization who can run a more successful ***Transition Center***.