



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

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Greetings Councilmember Graham and other members of the City Council. My name is Dayar Brown and I am 19 years old. I am a DC foster youth and I have been in care for 12 years. I am currently living in a foster home with a very supportive foster mother. I am a second year student at UDC majoring in Food Science with a focus on Nutrition. I'm here to testify in support of the Foster Youth Rights Amendment Act of 2012.

Currently all is well with my placement, rights, education, and overall well being. Although things are well now, there were times when huge storms of injustice and violations of my rights took place in my life. I quaked in fear and regretted every day I opened my eyes wishing it was just some terrible dream that I couldn't wake from.

When I first got in the system I was placed in a foster home. My foster parents looked really good on paper, but they physically abused me for a year and a half. I didn't know at the time that what they were doing was wrong because I didn't know that I had the right to be free from abuse. The same thing had happened in my biological family's home. The only reason it got reported was because my teachers noticed the bruises. After that I was removed from the placement and placed in another foster home.

I was never educated about my rights, so I wasn't aware that they had been violated until coming to YWP. Knowing about my rights has made me more positive and given me some understanding into the rights that I have. It has made me feel like a human being. Sometimes in the foster system you feel like a number, or something that is being passed around from person to person. Being aware of my rights has made me feel like a member of society. I think it's a good idea that the bill requires CFSA to inform youth and provide them with copies of their rights. Youth should be educated on their rights because it's good to know if someone has been violating them.

During my senior year of high school I was able to utilize the \$500 for graduation expenses and access the ETV to fund my college education, but that only came about because I knew I had the right to those things.



Having access to your personal information is also important because CFSA has lost my birth certificate and social security card. I first asked for those documents 2 ½ years ago when I was about to travel and needed an id to get on the plane. CFSA said I would have the documents before I went on my trip, but they never gave them to me. Thank goodness I was under 18 and didn't need them, but when it came time to open up a bank account it was hard because I didn't have the required documents. I had to do it on my own and overcome a lot of hassle and obstacles. Currently, the bill would require CFSA to receive personal documents within 30 days of leaving care, but I think youth should receive these things once they turn 16 because that's usually the age when people begin to look for jobs and open up bank accounts and they need a form of id that is not their school id. A ward letter doesn't mean anything when you're at the social security office trying to get your stuff.

Overall, I think this bill will be really beneficial for foster youth because it ensures them that they have rights, but only if the Council holds CFSA accountable for its implementation.

Thank you for allowing me to testify this afternoon.