



**Testimony to the Committee on Human Services
In Support of Bill 19-803, The Foster Youth Rights Amendment Act of 2012**

**DeManguss Williams
Foster Care Campaign Youth Staff, Young Women's Project**

July 11, 2012

Good afternoon Councilmember Graham. My name is Demanguss Williams and I am 16 years old. I have been in the foster care system for one year. I am here today to testify in support of the Foster Youth Rights Amendment Act of 2012.

This bill is important to me because without it group homes could do whatever they want to the kids living there and there would be no way for the children to stand up and fight for themselves.

When I entered the system I was told that I would be in foster care for four months. Every time I ask why I'm still in the system I'm told to ask someone else and no one has ever given me an answer. I have a right to understand why I'm still in foster care and for people to be straight with me. To get in touch with my social worker it can take two months, which makes me feel frustrated. When I do see her and tell her how I feel, she gets mad. She is supposed to return my phone calls and check in with me regularly.

I have been living in a group home since last summer. I'm supposed to get three meals a day, but in my group home I only get two, sometimes one meal per day, which is dinner. Sometimes we don't even eat dinner because the staff members won't cook.

I have a right to clothing and footwear, but when I need clothes, the group home gives me a \$200 clothing voucher to Burlington, but I can never find anything to wear there. I have told them that I can't find things I want there, but they keep giving me the same card to the same place. I feel like I don't have a choice in the clothes that I wear and I only get the voucher twice a year, which is not enough.

Knowing that the bill is not final means I still have a chance to put things in there that should be there, even if I'm already set to leave foster care in a few months. I feel that people in group homes should get an allowance of \$25 a week. Right now I get \$10 a week. I don't have enough money for transportation or to buy things I need, like deodorant, because my group home makes me buy my own if we run out of it in the house.



Many of my closest friends live in a group home and they all sit around just talking about what's wrong because they think there's nothing we can change. If we all pull together as one, we will come out with a victory and not leave people feeling like they just wasted their time. No one wants to have their time wasted. I don't want to pass up a perfect chance to do some type of good because I know that if someone else was in my position I'd want them to do the same thing for me.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and have a nice day.