

**Testimony to the Committee on Human Services**

**For the Performance Oversight Hearing on the Child and Family Services Agency**

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Good afternoon Council Member Graham and members of the Committee on Human Services. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Dolores Whittaker. I am 16 years old and I attend Accotink Academy as a sophomore. I live in a foster home in Maryland and I have been in the system since 2008. I am a member of the Foster Care Campaign staff. I'm interested in going to the army. I am in Young Marines I am a private. My goals are to complete high school and then go to the army. If I don't go to the army then I would like to go to college. I don't know what I would like to study in college.

I am here to share my personal experience as a youth in foster care receiving an allowance.

Allowance is an important issue. All foster care kids, especially older youth, need an allowance so that they can save money. Youth want to go out with their friends, pay for their phone, and cover anything else that is not covered by their foster parents. Most youth I know have to buy these things with their own money. How much allowance you get really depends on your foster parents or group home. Some are very lucky and get a good amount and others get basically none. Having a job is great but high school students should not have to work just to pay for basic needs like clothing and food. Even in foster care you should be able to have a few extras like non-foster care kids.

Right now I get a \$130 monthly allowance from Foundations (the CFSA contractor I am placed with). I use this allowance to buy shoes, clothes, and my phone. I pay for my own phone and I always have. My phone is \$55 a month and whatever is left over, I use on clothes. My foster family doesn't give me money for the movies or extras. My foster family pays for food in the house and transportation. Anything outside the house I pay for. I don't have much money left over to put into savings. Each month I save \$5, which I know is not much. I have a checking account with SunTrust but I would like to save more each month but right now I am not able to. Right now I do not budget; I need help with developing a budget and learning more about finances.

**Clothing and other essentials:** I have two pair of shoes now. In the summer time when I have a job, I will be able to buy shoes and get my shoe game up. It might not seem like it but cell phones are important. This is how I call my social worker and stay in contact with my job. It is how I talk to my friends and my family. It's a place to keep all your information – phone numbers, people, and addresses. I live all the way out in Brandywine and I go to school in Virginia and my phone helps me stay connected. Without my allowance the phone would not be possible.

My partner Samaria Holton will testify to our group's recommendations for the allowance program.

We are asking you to please support our allowance recommendations and I appreciate you taking the time to listen to what I have to say. Hope you have a nice and bless day!