



**Testimony to the Committee on Human Services  
For Bill 19-691, the Foster Youth Employment Amendment Act Of 2012**

**Kianni Jones  
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Good morning Council Member Graham and other members of the Committee. My name is Kianni Jones and I was in the foster care system from November 2006 to September 2011. Since I aged out of the system, I have been living with my foster father. I've been working with the Young Women's Project (YWP) since October 2010. I am here today to support the Foster Youth Employment Amendment Act Of 2012 and to share my employment experience and why this legislation would help me.

Right now I am working part time at YWP and studying massage therapy at the National Massage Therapy Institute in Falls Church. I have a lot of different career interests. I am interested in retail, sales, and administrative work. I would enjoy getting a stable job in a government agency. I also like public speaking a lot. Someday I hope to own and run my own salon and spa.

During my time in the system and since, I did not receive any help from CFSA. They gave me a referral to RSA but it never resulted in a job. I got all the jobs I've had on my own. I was 16 when I started working with the Summer Youth Employment Program. I was an administrative assistant at Walter Reed Medical Center for three years and I loved it. I also worked at HUD as an administrative assistant and a teacher's assistant at UDC. I've worked in retail jobs at a pottery studio, Ben & Jerry's, Macy's and Starbucks. All of these positions were seasonal or part time, minimum wage and without benefits. During the past two years, I attended Montgomery Community College part time studying graphic design. The vast majority of the courses were developmental so I only have one credit to show for all the time that I spent in school.

This bill could help me because it would give me a better chance of getting an interview and a position that has benefits. I have many qualifications, but I need help preparing for positions. I never had a full time job and it's hard to maintain focus for 40 or more hours a week. Ideally – I would like to start with a paid internship and work my way up in the world of work. I have a lot of responsibilities at home– like cooking and caring for my family members and taking care of the house I share with my foster father. Also, I've had to overcome a lot of unfavorable and even unbearable working environments. I was discriminated against because of my gender identity and that negatively impacted my performance. If I am being treated poorly, I am much more likely to be late or have a bad attitude. It's hard to deal with this over and over again. Part of succeeding for me means having a supportive work environment and not having people constantly putting me on the spot. I need to be respected.

Thank you Council Members for giving me the opportunity to present to you today.