

**Testimony to the Committee on Business, Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
For The Budget Oversight Hearing on the**

Department of Employment Services

**LaTonya Anderson
Youth Advocate, Young Women's Project**

April 25, 2016

Good Morning Chairman Orange and members of the Committee on Business, Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Latonya Anderson. I am currently living in Ward 1. I am in the 11th grade at Cardozo Education Campus. When I graduate from high school I plan on going to Spelman College or Morgan State and becoming a family lawyer.

I am here today to ask you to support a \$1million budget allocation for a year round employment program for high school students. Through this program high school students will work part-time for private businesses, government agencies and nonprofit employers.

I have been working as a Youth Advocate on the Foster Care Campaign at the Young Women's Project (YWP) since November of 2014. I have been working as a Peer Educator since the Fall of 2015. I was fifteen and in the tenth grade when I started working with YWP. There have been many benefits to having this job--many benefits outside of the money that I make. I started working at YWP at the same time that I left foster care so the timing was great. Leaving foster care meant that I was responsible for paying for more of my personal items such as food and money at home was limited. My mother is working at a fast food restaurant and the money that she brings home is not enough to pay for everything.

I have also learned many life skills by having a job. I have learned to keep calm and manage my temper. I have learned how to effectively communicate and other important skills such as how to "fake it until you make it." I have learned the importance of being reliable and completing work assignments. Even when things are not going my way I have learned to how better deal with things--not every day is going to be good.

This summer I had the pleasure of speaking with Councilmember Grosso and getting his perspective on things that are going on in the school system and how we can make them better. I was also able to improve my time management skills because in the real world there are deadlines for everything. I am grateful for my job because

many jobs prefer people who are 18 and older. I have applied to Urban Alliance for a summer internship at the World Bank and hopefully I will have the opportunity to work with them during my senior year as well.

I participated in the Summer Youth Employment Program (MBSYEP) for two years. The first year I worked at a fashion and design program. Even though it wasn't my ideal placement it was not so bad. SYEP is great but it is only during the summer. Six weeks is not enough. Last year SYEP was very well run. I didn't have any issues with my pay and the transportation money was amazing and beneficial. I was able to get a job that will help build my resume.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Committee allocate \$1 million for the creation of a year round employment program for high school students. Through this program 500 high-school students will work 6-12 hours a week in local businesses, government agencies and non-profit organizations. Youth will be paid an hourly stipend of \$8.25. We recommend that DOES use a system similar to SYEP where youth and employers can register on the DOES portal and youth are paid on a debit card.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions.