

**Testimony to the Committee on Human Services  
For the Performance Oversight Hearing on the Child & Family Services Agency**

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Greetings Councilmember Graham and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Michael Gaskins and I am a 17 year old senior at Maya Angelou Public Charter School. I also am a foster care youth, and have been in care for 10 months. Right now I am transitioning from one foster home to another. I am a youth ambassador for OYE and a youth staff at the Young Women's Project. I am testifying on behalf of the Foster Care Campaign and on behalf of CFSA today. I would like to discuss my issues on placement.

I entered care after being discharged from the hospital because of neglect and home situations. As of right now I am transitioning between homes. I was first placed in a foster home where I developed good relationships and lifelong connections with a great parent. We moved from Hyattsville, Maryland to Largo, Maryland in August 2012. By us moving, the agency requires new houses to be inspected. The call was put in the day after we moved; however, we did not hear back from them until the middle of November. In December 2012 I was removed from my home, where I was in a comfortable living environment and with family. I was removed from my house the week before Christmas, but I could not understand why. It felt like it all happened at once, but after I was removed, I was put into respite. This made my life harder because I had to learn how to still deal with the pressure of finishing school and making sure I had enough money to travel back and forth on Metro.

I was supposed to transition to another foster home placement on February 18. I had a transition meeting with my team on February 14. As a teenager, I feel that there should be a computer, printer, and internet in your home if you're a high school student because not everyone can get to a library. Not everyone has money for a laptop, and CFSA does not help with achieving that goal.

Teenage youth that are in care should not be placed with foster parents who cannot accommodate the needs of teenagers who are in school that will be graduating. I feel that CFSA should connect youth to foster parents that can provide accommodations that are appropriate for the age of the youth in their home. Foster homes should have inspections that should tell you if the home is appropriate based on age level. Some homes would be okay for an elementary school student or middle school student, but not a high school student.

Thank you very much for your time.