



Testimony to the Committee on Human Services

For the Oversight Hearing on Child and Family Services Agency

Nakea Paige, DC Foster Youth and Michigan State University Student

March 17, 2010

Hello Chairman Graham and Committee members. I am Nakea Paige, a DC foster youth. Sorry I can't be there in person to present this testimony (I am away at college) but when YWP staff told me that there was a hearing today—I wanted to share this story.

This is my first year of college. I thought that this would be an easy transition however it was tougher than I would have ever imagined. I attend Michigan State University and I am majoring in chemical engineering. While being away from home has its challenges, not knowing if my I was going to be able to complete my first year was even scarier.

I was first introduced to the Office of Youth Empowerment in January of 2010. I was told that I had to go if I was going to get any funding for college, so I went. I sat through several meetings that did not concern me just so that I can get money for college. While my Judge and some family members, and even the people at CFSA told me to go to another school, I was determined to go to the school of my own choice. I gave the people at OYE all of my information in June when I received the list of funding for school. We had several meetings and I was told that my application for the Education Training Voucher was being processed. In August, 3 weeks before I was suppose to leave for school, I was told that my application was denied because it was not complete. Through all of the meetings I had with the people at CFSA no one ever told me this information. I eventually got it done just so that my money would be held even longer.

The people at CFSA were supposed to pay my room and board and the rest of my tuition at the set cost that was on my bill; however they did not do that. CFSA waited until all of my financial aid was exhausted and then paid the money. Because of this, the



refund check that I was supposed to get was not the amount that I should have gotten. I did not have the money to get my books so I had to take out a loan. This loan was to be paid back by the people at CFSA after I sent them the paper work. I took out the loan in September and it didn't get paid until December. Because they took so long to pay the loan back my school withheld my grades until it was paid. Even after several attempts and calls to CFSA it still took a long time for them to pay it. It took for my Judge to have to say something before any action could be done. Being that the rest of my tuition and my room and board were not paid, I thought that I would be receiving a letter soon saying that I would have to leave campus. It scared me. Money continued to be an issue that I faced when it came to dealing with CFSA. This semester my judge had to do another court order for the people at OYE/CFSA to pay for my books. They were telling me that I had to put in the request 2 weeks in advance however I didn't know that until a week before I was supposed to go back to school. There are a lot of things that I did not know about dealing with the process of getting my money. It was not due to the fact that I did not ask, it was because no one at CFSA/OYE said anything about it when I called and talked to them. I feel that this should not be an issue and that this issue should be fixed.