



**Testimony to the Committee on Human Services
On the Foster Youth Employment Amendment Act of 2012**

**Quamesha Lee
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Good morning Council Member Graham and other Committee members. My name is Quamesha Lee. I am 18 years old and currently attend Dunbar Senior High as a junior. I haven't really made my mind up yet, but when I finish school I would like to go into the army, own my own hair salon, or become a nurse. I have been in and out of the foster care system my whole life. I currently work at the Young Women's Project on the Foster Care Campaign, where I fight for youth rights in the system. I am here to support the Foster Youth Employment Amendment Act of 2012.

The only jobs I've had were summer jobs through Summer Youth Employment Program. I've worked as a camp counselor in a church and with Strive DC in a job readiness program where they trained me how to do an interview and develop a resume. I also filed and answered phones. This gave me experience for some of the work I do now at Young Women's Project. Every day they made us dress up like we were going to an interview. It made me feel like I was really working somewhere. I've applied for other jobs but haven't gotten any.

One barrier I face while looking for a job is not having enough experience. To find jobs, I Google stores, apply on-line, or will do an application in the store. I get stuck on the applications. I'm not sure what some of the questions are asking and I'm not sure how to answer them. I don't want to put the wrong answer. But if I don't answer, it's an incomplete application. Usually, I have to go to an older person or an employee of the store to help me out. It's frustrating for me to try to do something that I don't really know how to do. If I'm in a store, I want to be able to turn in the application so I can get an on the spot interview.

I've never really had an actual job. To me an actual job means making more money, working longer hours, and having more responsibility. To get an actual job I need experience, customer service and computer skills. Jobs will look at how long I have been working at a place and how much experience I have. When I apply for a job and I don't get a call back, I think it is because I don't have experience or I didn't fill out the application correctly.



I didn't even know there was a website for DC government jobs. I thought I just Googled the jobs I wanted to apply for. With a government job I can get benefits and I think I can get paid better. This bill can help young people in the foster care system to better their experience. People with parents have more support, and with this bill, foster youth will be getting the support that they need.

I recommend that you have a job readiness program attached to the bill. I think it would help foster youth if CFSA had a program specifically to help young people fill out job applications. If CFSA does have a job readiness program they should make it more widely known to foster youth. How can someone be 18 and not know how to complete a job application?

Once again, thank you Council Members for letting me speak with you today.