

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

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Good afternoon Council members. Thank you for listening to my colleagues and me today. My name is Samaria Holton. I am eighteen years of age and I attend Booker T. Washington Public Charter School in North West, DC. I am not a part of the DC Foster Care System, but at the Young Woman's Project I work with my peers to better the problems within the system. I am here today to testify, and to support my peers.

Working with kids who are in the foster care or group homes, has taught me a lot about their living situations. I believe that everybody should be treated fair. They don't always receive the correct money and group homes make them use their own money for things that they should supply. Social workers take a long time to return phone calls when a child asks or need something. Social workers should not take longer than a week to return a call.

I can connect to foster care children and children in group homes who have to supply things for themselves. I also have to supply things for myself because my mother does not always buy me things I may need. I have advantage because I have family members who can help me out with the things I may need. Kids who are in foster care or group home may not have anyone to help them. If the social workers and the staff within the group home did their jobs fair, and correct than my peers wouldn't have a challenge in taking care of themselves.

Young people in foster care deserve the same rights as me because they are not different from me. There is no reason that they should not have the same rights. They should be treated fair and like any other person who is not in foster care. Here are some of the rights I have that they don't.

1. I have the right to call home and have someone answer the phone.
2. I have the right to get transportation from my mom whenever I need it.
3. I have a choice of where to shop.
4. I can go to the refrigerator whenever I want and it's not locked. I can go get what I want whenever I want it.
5. I don't have a whole bunch of people who I have to share with.
6. I have the right to my own room and not share it with someone I don't even know and not know when my stuff will be stolen.

7. I have the right to clean my house and make sure it's clean. It's my house. As a foster youth, when you move into a house, you don't know if it's clean. I had a friend who got bit by a bed bug in a group home.

It seems as if the social workers and the staff that work at the group homes are not doing their jobs properly. They seem to take advantage of my peers because they are young, and they might feel that my peers probably don't know much about their rights that they have within the foster care system or group home. I feel that there should be punishable consequences to those staff members who are not doing their jobs properly. They should be reported and be given a warning. It should be cause for termination.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.