



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

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Good afternoon council members my name is Aspen Scott I am 16 years old and attend Woodrow Wilson sr. high school. First I would like to thank you all for this opportunity to speak on one of the issues in foster care. I am also a staff member with the Foster Care Campaign (FCC). I am not in foster care but some of my family members are. They have been split up and mistreated I saw my cousins switched from home to home and it really effected them mentally and with school work. Now they are in a good stable home. I am here to be an ally with foster youth and to speak out for them because I hate seeing people wronged and not being able to stick up for themselves. We at the FCC work to improve the foster care system.

I am here today to speak on a big issue that the FCC has been fighting for- The youth bill of rights. We want to make sure that youth -- and the adults who are working with them -- know their rights and are able to access them. We also want to make sure that these rights are codified into law.

I went through a period in my life when my rights were violated. Also having no idea what my rights where there for until someone told about my right and explained them to me. Now I know, and Im able to advocate for myself in many situation and make shore that my rights are upheld. This is what the youth bill of rights can do for the youth in foster care if it is enforced and changed into laws and not guild lines. I want to make sure foster youth have same opportunities that I have and I treated with dignity and respect where ever they go.

Older youth in the system that I have spoken to feel as thou they are on their own and that no one is looking out for their well-being. Many youth don't know that they have a right to adequate food and clothing, to live in a house that doesn't have rodents, and to be able to apply to college.

Last year, we pushed CFSA to codify youth rights and they responded by creating a youth bill of rights that is currently on their web site. The only problem with this document is that it doesn't include all of the youth rights and may lead youth to think that they don't have many rights (when in reality they do). Nakea Paige, one of our



youth staff members in foster care, described the CFSA bill of rights as “the rights of people working with foster youth.” We are concerned that the detail and thoroughness of the rights are inadequate -- especially compared to the level of comprehension provide by the other states. By making the rights more specific, then the youth will be able to advocate on their own behalf. We made several recommendations to CFSA of rights that needed to be added but they were not included in the final version.

Because rights are so important and because the CFSA youth bill of rights is not complete – we are asking the Committee to develop and pass legislation that would create a bill of rights for DC Foster Youth. This new law would include all of the rights that they have and states them in a clear way. Youth would get a copy of the bill of rights as soon as they came into the system. It would ensure youth knew what they were entitled to and would help them advocate for their rights. I attached the CFSA bill of rights and our suggested changes as part of this testimony.

We at the FCC are here to help the youth in foster care. But helping only goes so far we need the council members help to change these problems. I again would like to thank you all for coming and listening to me speak on the youth bill of rights.