

**Testimony to the Committee on Health and Human Services  
For the Budget Oversight Hearing on the Department of Health**

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Hello Chairwoman Alexander and other Committee members. My name is Dae'Sean Tibbs, I am in the 12th grade and attend School Without Walls, and I live in ward 8. I am a Peer Advocate at The Young Women's Project and I've been working at YWP for about seven months.

I'm here to talk about my experience as a peer educator at YWP. I've enjoyed every last moment of the experience, and it's been beneficial to discover and learn new things in the safe zone that the Young Women's Project (YWP) creates.

In my time at YWP, I've discovered that people from several schools face some of the same issues that I do, such as bad counselors, lacking in AP courses, lack of materials, and poor school objectives. YWP allows us to all project our voice, and fight against those problems in our communities through testimony, or by exposing the problem through social media and other outlets. In fact, this introduction to the political process has given me insight into possible career opportunities, such as studying political science as a major. The fact that I can even mention political science as a possibility shows how much YWP has influenced me. I want to continue expressing my voice. This trait was not one that I had prior to coming to YWP. Before YWP, I did not believe young people could take part in advocacy.

On top of giving teens these skills, we are payed because YWP focuses on workforce development. We're employees, not students, but we happen to learn a lot as we apply ourselves to complete our job. The purpose of paying us is not simply to make us stick around, but to show us that we are workers, who should be compensated. One of the many issues we face as youth today is where to get money. Being able to have a paying job helps in many ways, such as providing food for ourselves, especially when all the food some people get is at school. Some of my friends have expressed the importance of school lunch to me in

their lives due to the effects of homelessness and poverty. Whatever the reason may be, it's true that the money comes in handy and gives us a bonus reason to keep coming.

For these reasons, I believe that youth need opportunities to explore interests and gain skills, while getting paid for valuable work. Please support the allocation of \$190,595 in the DOH budget for peer educator stipends. Thank you for listening to my testimony this morning.