

Testimony to City Council
“Yes Youth Can: Confronting the Challenges of Youth Aging Out” Round Table

Loretta Singletary

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Hello Chairman Wells and guests. My name is Loretta Singletary I am 20 years old. I attend Continental Academy Home School. I want to become a Crime Scene Investigator in Washington DC. I've been in the foster care system for 6 years.

When I first enter the foster care system I was in a foster home in NE DC I was only there for a week, then I moved into another foster home in Landover, MD with my younger sister. In my foster home my elderly foster mom had her adult daughter and her grandson, one year old foster baby and a 9 year old foster girl. It was ok at first. She treated me nice, respected my privacy, and asked me if I needed anything. As time went on, it became more difficult for me to live there. I felt that I really needed my mom. Not having her around made me lose focus in school. I was told by my social worker that she couldn't find my mom. So I went and talked to my old neighbor and they gave me her phone number. When I told my foster mom I found my mom, she said that she could not call me on her telephone.

While I was in my foster home in Maryland, I continued to go to my DC school at Lincoln Middle School where I was receiving good grades. I had some problems there because I had to ride the short school bus to school but I did not let that stop me from graduating from middle school. I started to attend Fairmont Heights High School. I couldn't focus there because I was still confused about being in the foster care system. So I would skip certain classes. I didn't get all of my credits that year. One day when my sister and I were coming home from school, we found my foster mom washing and

packing our clothes. She told us that she could not keep teenagers and the next day my sister and I were separated. I was placed in a Saga Adventures group home in DC by the jail and my sister was put in another foster home in Maryland. I was very upset that I was not with my sister and brother. The only time I got to see them was when we had family visits at CFSA.

When I moved to the group home, I went to school at Eastern Sr. High School, but this school wasn't for me. I went and tried my best and went to my classes everyday. But the kids would fight everyday and nobody was learning. So I asked my GAL to take me out of DCPS schools because I didn't like sitting in the classroom and not learning anything. Because I was behind on my credits I decided to go for my GED.

I started working on my GED at YouthBuild where I also did construction and was getting paid to attend classes and build homes. My social worker asked me if I wanted a tutor because I was struggling with the math portion of the GED. Because I had so much other stuff to do like going to school, going to Keys for Life which my group home made me do, going to see my therapist, I didn't have time for anything extra. I ended up graduating from the YouthBuild vocational school but I didn't pass the GED practice test. Now I am in home school through Continental Academy and have a tutor that I see twice a week. This year I plan to get my high school diploma before I turn 21 in December.

Moving to a group home was different. There are different rules and different faces. I was tired of moving and I didn't want adjust it. I was welcomed very nicely by the other girls that stayed there and the staff was okay at first. They made conversation and they treated me nice and fairly. But when we moved to a new house, everything changed. Counselors would yell at us, makes treats to take away our allowance and

weekend passes. The counselors would also make fun of the girls living in the home. The counselor would tell the residents confidential information about the other residents in the house.

When I turned 18 I was moved to Fihankra Place ILP. I have been there for the past two years. There are a few pros and cons of this program. Some of the counselors gossip about the ILP residents to both the residents and the staff so the residents don't trust the staff there. I have a case manager at the ILP named Ms. Jackson that helps me every time I need something. Ms. Jackson has help me manage money, open bank accounts, apply for jobs and more. She helped me get my current job. She makes sure I put education first and looking at new paths that I can take when it's time to age out.

Aging out is very important to me because it gives me a chance to experience the real feeling of being on my own, paying bills, staying on a monthly budget, keeping and having good credit, and so much more. I learned all of this from my case manager. I turn 21 in December 12, 2010. Right now I continue to save money in my back account, work towards my high school diploma, research apartments in my budget, and look for a part time job. When I turn 21 I want to be ready and follow my transition plan that was planned for me. I feel I will find a job that will let me have my own apartment when I age out. I have applied to work at retail stores and restaurants. I have also already signed up for Rapid Housing and my social worker has signed me up to have a collaborative worker.