



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

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Good morning Councilmember Graham and other Committee members. My name is Jacquelyne Allen and I have been in the foster care system since 2009 when I was 16. From August 2009 to October 2011 I lived with a foster parent. I now live with my birth mother in supervised custody.

I would like to discuss the issues of teen moms in the system and foster parent relationships. These are real issues to me because I was a teen mother in the system that was not treated fairly. My son is going on two years.

When I first moved in with my foster mother she was the sweetest lady ever. She would buy me clothes and pay for my hair to get done. She gave me an allowance and drove me places, but when I was four months pregnant and started showing, things changed. When I was pregnant I was only getting \$20 a week from my foster mother and had to catch the metro and bus in the rain and snow, including in my ninth month. I was called out my name and things were stolen from me by another teen in the home. When I had my son it got worse.

My foster mother moved my allowance up to \$40 a week, but that wasn't enough for things like clothes, diapers, wipes, and personal transportation. She would buy things for the baby here and there, but whenever I would ask for help with diapers she would ask why I couldn't do it. She would only buy 10 jars of baby food, but that would be gone quickly. I had to use my allowance to buy food for my son. My foster mother would only buy us clothes from the cheapest stores, but would always buy expensive clothes for herself. The clothes that she bought us did not last long.

When I told CFSA about her calling me out my name we had a meeting, but my foster mother said that she didn't do it. She would always put on an act whenever we met with CFSA. I asked my social worker to put in a camera so they could see how things really were. CFSA didn't do their job at all. I would go to my GAL everyday because there was always something going on. My GAL called my social worker, who would ask me about my issues, but when I told her, my foster mother made it seem like they were my fault.



My foster mother lived in Baltimore and my mother lives in DC. I was supposed to see my mother every other weekend, but there were times when I missed those visits because my foster mother wouldn't take me. She would say that she didn't have money or that she was scared of bridges, even though she would drive over bridges when she took vacations. There were times when I missed my Keys for Life meetings because she said that she didn't have a way to get us there.

I told CFSA about my missed court ordered visits and when they asked my foster mother why, she would say that she didn't have a way to get me there. But if its court ordered, she should have already had a way to get me there. CFSA never did anything about it.

My foster mother wouldn't help me with my homework, which caused me to fail two classes one semester. Luckily my school allowed me to make it up. There were so many ants in the house that I once found one crawling on my son. But when I told my foster mother about it, she refused to get an exterminator. There were times she came home drunk and would bring different men in the house. I told my GAL and social worker, but when they spoke to her about it she told them the people she brought home were only her friends, but that was a lie. CFSA believed her over us.

I felt like no one was listening to me because I was a foster child. For a moment I was so depressed that I would just stay in my room and not speak to anybody. I spoke to my GAL about leaving the house, but I was so close to graduating that I ended up staying. After I graduated, my foster mother would call me lazy and say I wasn't looking for a job even though I was. Because I wanted to leave, we would talk about independent living options, but she said that if CFSA asked her she would tell them that I wasn't ready. If I left, then she wouldn't have received money.

I think that she was not into the job and she was just in it for the money. I still love her, but I don't like the things she did.

Because I was a teen mom, the allowance wasn't enough. All of my money went to my son. There were times when I wanted to go places with my son, but couldn't because I didn't have any money, and times when I missed my son's doctor appointments because I didn't have enough money for travel. My foster mother would always make me use my allowance for transportation, but what can you do with only \$40? With more money I could have opened up a bank account and saved some money to buy food and clothes. When you're in foster care you're supposed to get an allowance for yourself and your child.



CFSA should enforce the law of teen moms in foster homes. Teen moms should get a certain amount of allowance for them and their child; transportation to doctor appointments, school, and day care; and a certain amount in a clothing voucher. Parenting classes would also make it easier. I would have learned how to teach my son how to do things. My foster parent didn't have any kids, so she couldn't help me because she didn't know herself.