



**Testimony to the Committee on Human Services
On the Foster Youth Rights Amendment Act of 2012**

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Good morning Councilmember Graham and other Committee Members. My name is Katrice Starnes, I am 16 years old and currently attend Bell Senior High School as a rising a senior. I want to attend Dickenson University or the University of Miami to become a pediatrician, an athletic trainer or a physical therapist. I've been in foster care for about 4 years. I currently work at the Young Women's Project on the Foster Care Campaign where we advocate for youth in foster care. I'm here to support the Foster Youth Rights Amendment Act of 2012.

To me the Foster Youth Rights Amendment Act of 2012 means clarity in your life as a foster youth. I've been placed in kinship care and my rights as a foster youth have not been violated. My grandparents make sure I have everything I need and don't hesitate to give me the things that I want. Although my rights have not been violated, there are still some things I didn't know I had the right to through CFSA. As a rising senior, college is a big part of what I will be focused on this year. I didn't know I had the right to "Financial assistance in the form of a voucher for up to \$5,000.00 per academic year for post-secondary education and training if [I am] eligible." Both of my grandparents work really hard. I have to pay for college and this financial aid would really help. I didn't know I had this right, but now that I know, I can and I will take full advantage of it.

This is why the Foster Youth Rights Amendment act is so important. I hope that you consider that there are foster youth who really want to attend college and need to know about their right to this financial aid. If foster youth don't know about their right to access financial aid, It could make them feel like they are not going to get anywhere and it can become a bigger stress worrying about how to pay for college.

By working with the Young Women's Project, I learned that a lot of my co-workers have a lot of problems within CFSA and have had a lot of their rights violated. Many of them didn't even know their rights. If they didn't know their rights, how would they know they're being violated? It doesn't cause problems for me, but it affects them terribly. I think the Foster Youth Rights Amendment Act of 2012 is important to me now because I believe everyone should have a good life without worrying about how they are going to get over their struggles without any help. We have the right to know what we are entitled to.

I hope you pass the Foster Youth Rights Amendment Act of 2012. Thank you for letting me speak to you today.