

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

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Good afternoon Councilmember Graham and other council members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is LaDonnae Wells. I am 17 years old. I am a member of the Foster Care Campaign staff at The Young Women's Project. I was under the care of CFSA until December of 2013.

I never thought I would see myself in this situation. I have heard others in foster care talk about what could happen when they age-out but I didn't think it would happen to me. It is scary. I am still a child. Due to the situation at home I feel like I need to find a new place to live, find a job and get into a new GED program.

My case with CFSA was closed on December 13th 2013. At the time my case closed it seemed like everything was going to be okay but now I do not think that it will be okay. I came into the system in 2010. My mother had a stroke and she could not care for me physically, mentally or emotionally so they removed me from her home. She was going through her own struggles trying to recover. I was 14 years old. I was in multiple foster homes. I could never understand why they wanted me to live with someone I didn't know. I would always abscond because I didn't want to be there. I went back to live with my mother in August of 2012 and my case was officially closed in December of 2013.

I was not prepared for life after my case was closed. I really feel like I am on my own. Things with my mom are very rocky. We have never gotten along. We fight all the time so I am looking for a transitional housing program. I am trying to find the right GED program also. I am also looking for a job to support myself. It would be nice if I could get more help with these things. I need to connect with a therapist. I need a mentor and life skills classes. I could use a CASA worker to help as well.

In the year before my case was closed CFSA did not offer me anything but different types of therapy. I admit that it tends to be a challenge to take on my problems. I have not gotten along with all the social workers that have come into my life but I think that in the system workers should help me solve my problems not complain about how much of a burden it is to work with me. I do try sticking things out until I feel like they are become overwhelming. I become irritable when I am given non goal-oriented services. They wanted me to do so many different types of therapy but what they were offering was not what I needed. They did not put me in classes that would help me to live as an adult. No budgeting skills or life skills class. I do not know how to get my SSI benefits. I should have been getting help since I was sixteen. Youth should know how to open up bank account, find housing and find a job. I do not have all of my important documents. My birth certificate

was lost and my file was misplaced. I had to go to the Social Security Office to get a new card. I had to pay for this myself using my already limited funds. I am trying to use whatever connections that I have through Department of Mental Health and at the Young Women's Project to get help.

CFSA really wants to close cases but those making the decisions do not realize the struggles that youth like me will face when we are back at home. I feel like my mother wants me out of her house. She might say otherwise but I know the truth. Instead of going home I asked if I could be placed in independent living. I told this to my judge, my social worker, GAL, everyone who has dealing with my case. My judge said "you have two parents who are very much alive and who can do for you so we are not putting you in independent living or sending you back to foster care." My father is not able to help right now because he is dealing with his own life struggles.

I have two recommendations for helping youth when their cases are closed:

1. CFSA should provide better training for youth whose cases are going to be closed so that they can be prepared for life after. Their parents or home situation might be shaky and they might end up worse off than before they entered.
2. CFSA should provide a counselor or CASA to help youth when their cases are closed. I need one person to help me network or make connections so I can feel comfortable knowing that I will survive.

Thank you and have a good day.