

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

**Phillip Wallace
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Good morning Councilmember Alexander and other Council members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Phillip Wallace. I am 19 years old and a graduate of Booker T. Washington Public Charter High School. I am from Northeast DC near Fort Totten. I am interested in enlisting in the military or one day study zoology, forensics, or business management. I am also a member of the Foster Care Campaign staff. We advocate improving the lives of teens and young adults. Thank you for hearing my testimony.

I testified last month during the Performance Oversight hearings for DHS and CFSA and I am here today to ask for your leadership and support in the development of a Young Adult Support Center. This center will be a place in the District where youth can receive coaching and support in the areas of employment, education and health and wellness. I know that you care about the lives of young people and we really want your leadership on making this center a reality.

Since the age of 16 I have been on my own. For 18 months I was in the independent living program at Sasha Bruce. I had to leave in March. Since March I have been moving from place to place. My supervisors at YWP helped me to find another shelter program at Catholic Charities. I went to the intake, interviewed and was accepted into the program. I never moved in because after touring and seeing the bad condition of the building and noticing how all the young men were housed in one room I felt like it was too confined and like a jail. It seemed better to continue moving place to place like I was doing than move into a place where someone could steal my belongings. Right now I am moving from place to place staying with friends and looking for permanent or transitional living program. It is hard for me to wash clothes, sleep, relax, and do anything else that requires a home, but I still get it done.

I don't have enough money for clothes, shoes, or transportation. Not only do I need money for myself, I need money for my siblings as well, they are struggling just as much as I am and as an older brother.

Employment.

I've been unemployed for awhile now. Everyday I'm on the computer filling out applications, going to job fairs, and even going in stores presenting myself to be hired. I have applied to restaurants, electronic stores like Best Buy, grocery stores, and big stores like Best Buy, Wal-Mart and Target.

Having resources on jobs is a big problem too. If I have an idea on jobs that's hiring, I probably wouldn't be unemployed. Other than YWP I don't know where to go to find resources. I need support getting connected to jobs or job training programs. Many young people in the District are struggling because they don't know where to go for resources. I need someone like a mentor to help me guide me

through the process of getting a job and preparing to be a good employee.

Education.

In January of this year I enrolled in classes at UDC. I attended classes for about a month and wasn't able to continue because I was not stable enough for school. I did not have enough changes of clothes and I was moving from place to place. It made it very hard to get to classes. I also had issues getting my status as a homeless youth certified. I am still working on this and I am working with the OSSE State Coordinator for the Homeless Children Program to get certified for next year. Because I wasn't certified I could not pay my tuition or purchase books. Hopefully by next fall I will either be back in school or enlisted in the Marines. Honestly I am sure what I want to do right because I don't feel stable enough to stick with much right now.

A place to go.

I don't really have a place to go during the day. Some days I don't really go out because most days I don't have money and most places require that you spend money. Other than the public library I don't have a place to use the computer and at the library there is a time limit and there are usually long waits. I don't have a place that I can go to exercise or even just to get away from the stress in my life.

Young adults need a place they can go where they are welcome -- to do their homework, relax, and even talk to someone who can help you with housing, education, and employment. We also need better staff in youth programs -- staff who actually like youth and want to help.

RECOMMENDATION**Please support funding for the development of a Young Adult Support Center**

City youth need a Young Adult Support Center (YASC) to go for support finding jobs and getting into school. It can be a place for youth to go during the day and on the weekends to use the computers, do homework or workout. It can be a place to connect to resources for job training opportunities. It will also be a wonderful place where they can go during the day to keep up hygiene, buy food and wash clothes.

The center will me find better employment and even employ me! It will help me further my education by helping me figuring out financial aid, pick the right colleges, select classes and figure out my career path.

Thank you for your time and for listening to my testimony.