

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

**Phillip Wallace
Foster Care Campaign Staff, Young Women's Project**

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Good morning Councilmember Alexander and other Councilmembers. 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 currently enrolled at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) and taking four classes. I am studying for law enforcement but my dream is be a zoologist. I love animals but that is a lot of school time and I don't have any help affording it. I need something that I can do right away and that pays well. 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 am here today to talk about some of my experiences with unstable housing and trying to find a job. I have been on my own since I was 16. Right now I am living at Sasha Bruce, an independent living program. The program lasts for 18 months. In March, I will have to leave and will need to find another place. I've been on my own since I was 16 -- moving from place to place. I've never been in foster care or any other youth system. When the Sasha Bruce program is over -- I will be homeless. It's only a transitional home. At the end of the day -- I'm still homeless. The Sasha Bruce program is helpful in some cases. There are food cards and I have my own room. We don't get much for food cards and they are not always there on time, and if you forget or misplace your receipt's you won't even get a food card. Right now I get \$45 a week for food but it's not enough: \$6 a day for food is hard to live on. Sasha Bruce provides tokens for transportation but it's not enough. For example I needed to go to Upper Marlboro to get my birth certificate and needed a ride to get up there, they won't provide it. That was holding me back. I had a job lined up but I needed my documents. The program doesn't provide good counseling or insights about jobs that's hiring. The staff that is there now doesn't really help. I am doing everything on my own on the internet.

Employment.

During my time being homeless, I have a big decrease in stability because of my employment status; I've been unemployed for awhile now and really don't know why. Everyday I'm on the computer filling out applications, reading the newspaper for jobs, and even going in stores presenting myself to be hired. Nothing seems to be working at this point. I don't have enough money for clothes, shoes, transportation, or to even move around throughout the day comfortably. It's stressing because I can't do the things I need and want to do in this chapter of life. I need money for school books and anything else that's just as important. 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, it kills me knowing I can't support them when needed to. 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. I don't know where to go to find resources, who can help me find resources, or who has resources on jobs. It's very frustrating because I don't know of any job or job training opportunities. The staff in the Sasha Bruce program I'm in does not give me resources on where to find jobs, they just expect u to go out and look for jobs, with the little bit of tokens they give you ,like that will

help,. Most adolescents like me struggle with employment because of not knowing resources.

Education.

I started classes at UDC on January 5 But I cannot get approved because my homeless status, selective service, and I'd records are still pending--which means all my grants are also pending. I don't know why it is taking so long. This is going on the 2 month. In the meantime, I can't get my books. I am up late at night reading books on my phone. I can't even log into the computer there. I'm not sure what the problem. I am committed to finishing school but it's not easy. I don't have a place to do my homework. Sasha Bruce's computers don't work. It's expensive to travel to class. I have tokens but it's not enough for the things I have to do. When it comes down to school, I need transportation. I have to get to school and then work and then to Maryland.

I have three recommendations for supports that would help young adults on their own:

Create a subsidized metro pass -- like the high school student pass for \$30--for youth who are in college or training programs and don't have a place to live. It would help me just to have a monthly pass that I could use on the metro or bus. I could actually get to work or school and wouldn't have to miss stuff because I didn't have transportation money.

Faster processing for college applications for youth who don't have a permanent residence: My status should not be pending for three weeks. There is no one I could go to help me. There should be a resource person at UDC when there are so many students there who are in my same situation.

Jobs Programs:

I feel as though, in order for me to accomplish employment, I need someone like a mentor to help me know what jobs are hiring or program that could identify all the jobs and training opportunities. There should also be a better way to reach out to youth about resources on jobs. . For example, during commercials, school assemblies, in housing programs, on build boards, passing out resource fliers, organizations throw resource parties for youth. There are many youth in D.C that have no idea on resources. I know if the resources were pushed out to youth more, it would be a "BIG" increase in employment for young adults

A place to go.

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. If you don't want to help, why are you working here?