

**Testimony to the Committee on Business, Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
For The Performance Oversight Hearing on the
Department of Employment Services
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Good Morning Chairman Orange and members of the Committee on Business, Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Shannon Mack and I am twenty-two years old and a DC Ward 1 resident. I am a member of the Foster Care Campaign staff at the Young Women's Project. We are advocates for youth and young adults in DC. We do outreach to youth and find ways to change and improve the system. I am a youth advocate because I believe that foster kids who need help should be heard whether or not adults feel that they are right. Thank you for hearing my testimony.

Since I graduated from high school I have been struggling to find consistent work. The only job that I have had in addition to the six hours a week I work at YWP was at Giant supermarket. To find jobs I search the internet and talking to people that I know. I aged out of foster care in 2014 and have been participating in the CFSA Aftercare program through Collaborative Solutions for Communities. I did not receive any employment support from my first four collaborative workers but my current worker has been very helpful.

Last summer I went to Job Corps at the Woodstock location in Baltimore. I went there with the intention of starting a HVAC program but unfortunately I left after two weeks because it wasn't a good match personally or for my career plans. I wanted a program where I would immediately start working on a certification or vocational trade and Job Corps felt more boot camp.

Right now I am employed through the DOES Career Connections program. I greatly appreciate the program because I need the money and it is a chance to improve my job skills but there are a few issues with the program. One of the biggest issues that I have is that the staff need to improve the way that they communicate with program participants. I started the program on January 4, 2016 and my first day at my job site was February 18, 2016. When I first entered the program it took me nearly a month to receive my job placement because of interview scheduling issues.

We were all assigned Success Coaches. Our coaches assist with finding placements site, help edit our resumes and provide individual support if needed. Overall my coach has been good but at times he is difficult to contact. When I had an issue with having my interview scheduled and finding a placement he was not much help and I had to contact the woman in charge of the program to receive help. She responded and helped immediately. She was also extremely professional and kind.

We went through seven days of training where we worked on basic employment skills, participated in mock interviews, and learned about professional dress. They also helped with our resumes. I have been assigned a job with a local organization, Sales and Margin, that does entrepreneurship training and my job title was administrative clerk. In the six days that I worked there we mostly read and studied the company. I cannot say that we did any actual work and there was very little structure. It seemed as though they were having us just read because they didn't have anything for us to do. It would have helped if the staff would have taken time to work with us directly and lead sessions. It was a challenge to sit and read for hours a day.

I have requested a new placement site because I would like to be placed with an organization that is more closely connected to my career interest. I would like to find a job where I am working with my hands. I need a place where I can learn skills that will help me to get a job in my career areas. I am not sure why I was assigned to the placement site because it is in no way related to the areas indicated on my initial career interests form.

My long term career plan is to find a job working with my hands such as plumbing, maintenance or repair. I am hoping that I will get on this path through the DOES Career Connections program. This is why I really want to find a placement site that meets my interests. I am willing to wait so that I am placed in the right site.

I have the following recommendations for improving DOES employment services:

- **DOES should open up a program for young adults who have a difficult time finding a job.** There should be program where youth can receive intensive work readiness training and receive a stipend. Some youth need more support and training than what is being offered by a program like Career Connections.
- **DOES should be more organized with the programs that they have.** The success coaches should make calls and make more efforts to make sure that participants have everything that they need.
- **Career Connections while a good opportunity is not a good program for struggling youth.** It is not ideal for young people experiencing life difficulties because you do not receive a lot of support and guidance. They expect you to do many things on your own--like make it to interviews and research placement sites.

Thank your again for the opportunity to testify.