



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

**Tequila Parker
Foster Care Campaign Staff, Young Women's Project**

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Greetings Chairman Graham and other council members. My name is Tequila Parker. I am 19 years of age and I am currently living with a foster parent. I've been in the DC foster care system for 16 years. I'm a senior at Advance Path. I've been working with YWP for about four months now.

The first issue I would like to bring to your attention is employment for the youth in the foster care system. During the past year, I've been finishing up my diploma and trying to find a job, but I don't know where to start, and don't have anyone in my life to help me. I tried to find a class that taught me how to job search, fill out applications, and complete a resume. I contacted OYE to see if there was a class and the only classes they had were for college prep. They do not offer any classes on preparing and looking for a job. It was frustrating. Right now I don't have another job and I'd really like to have one.

OYE did help me to enroll in a cooking class called Famtreat. The first month was a lot of paper work and there was no cooking. A lot of people stopped going, including me. There was no point. They switched the schedule, the class was unorganized, and it required traveling to different places that were not metro accessible.

CFSA should have more career opportunities to help youth learn and gain the skills that will help them find jobs that fit them and their schedules. For example, there should be more classes and the classes should cover basic stuff - like how to do a resume and look for a job, and more advanced stuff – like preparing for specific occupations. We also need classes on how to pay bills and take care of your own apartment for those of us who are preparing for independent living.

The next problem I want to talk about is transportation. Because I don't have any money, transportation is very difficult and very stressful. I've had many problems with getting back and forth to my court hearings, school, meetings, and job at YWP. Without employment and a steady income, it is very hard for me to get around and it makes everything else more difficult because the money I get from my foster parent is not enough to cover



transportation Because I couldn't get around, I missed a lot of school days and I failed the 12th grade because I was getting far behind in school work.

Transportation is a big problem for youth in foster care and it's caused by not having enough allowance. If you don't have a foster parent who helps you take care of your expenses, you are stuck. In my case, I get \$225 a month and it's supposed to cover everything but food. I have to pay for transportation, hygiene products, clothing, laundry detergent, and my phone bill. Transportation alone costs \$10 a day just to get to my job. When I add trips to appointments and family members it's more. I feel very isolated and I can't do what I need to do, like go to work, meetings, court, and family visits. In order to get around, sometimes I call my lawyer to pick me up or try to get money from my lawyer or grandfather. Since we don't get our whole allowance at one time, we can't get a smart pass and buy transportation in advance, which creates another barrier for young people in the system. We already have enough things going against us.

Not having enough money is a big problem. One time I went a whole month without washing my clothes. I had to go to my grandfather's house to wash my clothes. I could not afford detergent. \$225 is not enough. They say stretch it and save it, but you can't save money when you don't even have enough to buy clothes!

I have two recommendations for CFSA:

First, CFSA should provide youth with an unlimited travel pass – like the \$30 student pass that allows us to go everywhere we need. It could be only for DC and Maryland and it should allow you to get back and forth on the train. I wouldn't miss meetings or have to worry about going to work and not being able to get home. I wouldn't have to be stressed out about getting back and forth. I don't need more stress.

Next, foster parents should have to provide more supplies -- like hygiene products. The money issue caused arguments between me and my last foster parent, which is why I left my last house. She was telling me to save, but every time I turned around she was taking money out of my allowance. If I asked her for \$10 she would give it to me, but then take it out of my allowance without telling me. She was always complaining that she had no money. CFSA should guarantee a mandatory allowance for each child regardless of placement. I suggest \$325. Then I could pay my bills and still have \$60 to put in the bank.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.