

Trey Jones
Testimony to the Committee on Human Services
Adoptions Reform Amendment Act of 2009 Hearing

March 4, 2010

Hello Chairmen Wells and everyone here today. My name is Trey Jones. I am a 19-year-old foster youth and I have been in the system since I was 5 months old. Today I want to talk to you about permanency and how I feel about the Adoption Reform Amendment Act. First, I want to thank you for letting me speak on this issue of adoption.

This issue is important to me because I want to be adopted. Being adopted would give me my own space where I don't have to worry about disruptions or confrontations at home with people who live with me. Since September, I have lived in an Independent Living Program where I share a house with five other youth. I would rather have a guaranteed safe place with family. Today I want to talk about permanency for myself and also talk a little about the adoption bill.

Right now it seems like permanency isn't an option for me. Since I was five months old I have been living with my grandparents. But when my grandfather passed away in July of 2009, I was told I could no longer live in my grandparent's house. My grandfather was the one taking care of all of the house responsibilities such as doing the grocery shopping and transporting me to important meetings. Because I was in kinship care, both of my grandparents had to have a certain number of training hours to keep me in their home. After my grandfather died, my grandma wasn't able to keep up with the trainings to be licensed to keep me at home. My social worker told me CFSA said it would be a liability to keep me there because of the home license and because my grandmother would not be able to maintain doing everything for me my grandfather had did.

My parents really aren't a permanency option. I was taken from my mother's care due to abuse. She went to jail and also received anger management counseling. When I was five she and her lawyer tried to get me back but the judge would not allow her to take me. My mother and I have a great relationship now and it seems like she should have a second chance since now we're older and that was a long time ago. She lives down the street from my grandparents' house with my 3 little sisters.

I also have a great relationship with my dad. I talk to him almost every other day. He also tried to get me back. But the problem was that he worked until 7pm and I got out of school at 3pm, he was told that even though I was 17 going on 18 years old at that time, someone over 21 had to be at home with me when I came home from school. I think the requirement to have someone home for a 17-year-old is crazy and it makes me feel like I'm being treated like a kid. I do not agree with the reason why I was not able to live with my dad. Who else might this effect in foster care besides me?

I actually have a lot of family. I asked my social worker about staying with other family members, but she did not show much interest in helping find other relatives to live with. I have family members that I travel to see during the holidays in New Jersey, North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland. My older cousin on my mother's side who lives in New York wanted to adopt me. But he was required to come to DC to meet with my social worker and had to maintain contact with her. My social worker also said it would be difficult for me to live with him because he lived out of state and my social worker was not familiar with him.

There's no one else I can really depend on. My ideal situation would be to live with my dad. But the only option my social worker and CFSA gave me was to move into an ILP. Leaving my grandmother was one of the hardest things for me. We both cried about it. She was the reason why my older brother and I were not split up when we came into the system. My brother who is now 25 is still living with her and I am living in an ILP. I feel the system should do research and find what family exists to see if people are possible for adoption, instead of making ILP the only option. I feel regulations and policies should be flexible for youth by their age so older youth like myself can be adopted.

I would like to talk about the adoptive registry. I think there should be more family members that people can find on the site because, youth and families may not know too much about their families. Some might find family members through a cousin, aunt, and so fourth. I know if I didn't have information about my family from my parents and grandmother I would not be able to find my extended family.

About the contact agreement; I believe that matter should be handled case by case, because as you know all cases are not the same. I think that matter should be left up to the judge and the family, if the youth can keep contact with their biological family members. Along with that I agree that the adoption and guardian subsidy money should not be cut off when a youth turns 18. I

know in my case, if my grandmother adopted me; she would not have been able to support me the way she would wanted to because she was retired and couldn't pay for my schooling, food and other things by herself; but she was able to provide me a stable home.