Testimony Regarding: Senate Bill No. 1269, An Act Concerning the Quality of Legal Representation of Children and Youth in Juvenile Matters

Testimony of Mackenzie Robinson
To the Judiciary Committee

April 4, 2007

My name is Mackenzie Robinson and I have been in the foster care system since I was 7. My mom gave me up at age 5, and I stayed with a family friend through the courts. I liked being with her and going to church with her. When she got in trouble because of some domestic issues, I began staying with another lady from my church. When DCF found out that I was staying with this other woman, they took me from her home. DCF first placed me in a program at age 7. I spent the next 11 years in foster homes, hospitals, and other programs.

I have had attorneys and social workers since I became involved with DCF. While I remember one attorney I had early on, I never met with her outside of court at all. She never came to speak with me or see where I was living. I remember her being at one court hearing I had. I had her phone number at one point, but I do not remember her name or any of the other attorneys I had over the years. When I had problems, I didn't feel like I could call her for help or guidance. I never had a say in my own life. I felt like the attorneys and social workers just made decisions without me.

When I had problems, I would try to call my social workers, but often they didn't do anything to help me. I had one who was good, but others placed me in a program that was not right for me, and wouldn't give me all the information I needed to make good decisions about my own life. They bounced me from program to program. At the time, I had anger issues, which I think were mostly because I resented being in programs that I didn't think were helping me. Some of the programs I had been in dealt with my anger issues, but I spent 2½ years in a program for sex offenders because my social worker didn't tell me everything I needed to know before I agreed to go to that program. After the first therapy group session, when I realized what the program was really for, I wanted to call my social worker but I couldn't reach him. I tried getting help though a DCF hotline, but I was told that none of my social workers or their supervisors were there. My social worker never came to see me or take me out of the program like other social workers did for other children. I only got to leave for doctor's appointments. It was the worst 2½ years of my life. I had to wait until I was reassigned to one of my old social workers to get out of that program.

Now I am living in an independent living program in Bridgeport. I have been there since my case was closed at age 18. Even now, other kids have benefits that I have not been able to receive. I have asked for help with school, but I have not been able to get the help I need.

I think there are a lot of problems in the foster care system. I am sure the social workers and attorneys are busy, but I feel like a lot of people just aren't doing their job. I wish people had been there to help me when I needed them.