

Testimony Regarding
DCF Services to Prepare Youth Aging Out of State Care
Kendra Hill
Program Review and Investigations Committee
October 3rd, 2013

Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky, and distinguished members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee:

My name is Kendra Hill and I am 21 years old. I have been in the care of DCF since I was 6 years old. I am testifying today about DCF services to prepare youth aging out of State care.

I recently graduated from the University of Saint Joseph with a bachelor's degree in social work. In all honestly I can say that it was a struggle as is each day for youth in the care of DCF. The Department has served as my safety net, my family, my mentors, my supporters, my teachers and more importantly as the parents I have never had. During my time with DCF, I have gone through many transitions. However, I have come to realize that the most important transition I will ever go through is the transition out of DCF. When I first began to come face my transition I began equating this transition with that of losing a parent. However, I can say with all of the transitional planning I have done with my social worker and her superiors that this transition is no longer one of trauma but one of rebirth, growth and recognition of my achievements.

During my transitional planning period with DCF there were many things which I believe the department did well but there are also things which I believe DCF could improve on. I commend DCF on coming up with a plan for me and supporting me in recognizing my dreams and my fears.

Aging out of care is not only one of the most difficult things a youth can go through; it is also a transition which can cause an increased amount of trauma, or help a youth grow. I firmly believe that it is important for youth to be involved in their transitional goals. By allowing youth to be part of the planning when it comes to these transitions it creates not only a timeline but also a sense of security. In addition by allowing youth to be part of the planning of their transitional goals this helps youth to understand what is next and establish long term goals. When youth are involved in transitional planning, it helps to alleviate negative feelings which are usually associated with change. The youth's role in transitional planning allows youth to have a sense of security and stability. But in order for a youth to have the ability to make these goals I believe the state is in need of more programs which will help youth make these transitions. For instance, I am currently in The Connections program which is a housing program that helps me with not only life skills but will also help me pay for my rent. I believe that there should be more programs like these that help youth who are in independent living. I distinctly remember when I was first starting the transition becoming very scared that I was not going to be able to afford to stay in my apartment when I left the care of DCF.

Youth who have been in DCF for a long amount of time and are transitioning out of DCF, like myself, have come to depend on DCF and in many times have no one else to turn to. These youth in particular need to gradually transition out of DCF and away from the supports that come with being in DCF.

Having a voice allows us as youth to know that we are able to make our own decisions and begin to make the transition into adults who can function in society. Today your hearing my testimony has helped me in making that transition. Thank you.