

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 180
AN ACT CONCERNING PERMANENCY HEARINGS, YOUTH ADVISORY
COUNCILS AND FOSTER FAMILIES
Committee on Children
February 23, 2016

Good afternoon distinguished members of the Committee on Children. Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today about my experience in DCF care. My name is Lishkaly Padilla and I am 17 years old.

I have been in DCF care for 2 years. I have lived in multiple placements. It has been hard for me because I feel like my voice is not always heard when DCF is making decisions about my life.

I think you should support this bill for the following reasons:

1. I have never been to any of my permanency hearings or gotten notice of them. I would like to attend my permanency hearings so I know what DCF is telling the Judge about me and so that I could tell the Judge in my own words what I want to have happen to me and how I am doing.
2. I lived in Journey House for 8 months, a residential treatment program for girls, before I was moved to my current foster home. I think there should be a way for youth in residential placements to have a say about the rules. One part of living at Journey House that was difficult was that we were not allowed to sing or dance. That rule was made because some girls used song lyrics to antagonize other girls. That was unfair and if we had a youth advisory council we could try to change rules like that.
3. I think foster family profiles should be given out to foster kids before they are moved into a new home. It will make it easier for kids to feel comfortable and save them a lot of confusion and anxiety about being moved to a new home. It would be better to have this information in writing rather than just having a social worker tell you about the family so that you can re-read the information, take time to absorb it, and have a clear understanding of what you can expect in your new home. I came up with this idea when I was in a legal rights group called Speak Up at Journey House.
4. I lived in one foster home where I was treated badly. I was yelled at a lot or ignored by the foster parent. I did not feel comfortable in this home and I reported it. I was moved to a new home and the other home was closed down. No one would have known what was going on in that home if I did not speak up. Foster kids should be encouraged to tell their experiences through foster care surveys to make sure that we are treated right.

In conclusion, this bill will give kids in DCF care, like me, a voice in deciding what happens to them. I ask this Committee to support this bill. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Lishkaly Padilla