



Testimony to Chairman Seliger and the Senate Higher Education Committee on SB 1210

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I am here to testify on SB1210 and to impress upon you the importance of excluding the foster care population from this purposed bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

For the last 10 years, I have been advocating on behalf of the foster care population. At no fault of my own I entered the foster care system at the age of 8 and I emancipated out of the Texas Foster Care system at age 18. Soon after leaving the foster care system I found myself homeless with no place to call home. I had dreams of one day becoming a social worker so that I can help foster children, youth and young adults have a better future, with opportunities to thrive.

My dream soon became a reality less than a year after leaving the foster care system. I applied to a junior college with the help of my CPS case worker and my past therapist. Getting into college was very hard due to my educational disparities. While moving to over 20 different placements I also moved to several different schools. When I left the foster system I read at a 7th grade reading level and I barely knew how to write after 10 years of being in the foster care system. I didn't allow my past educational experience to determine my future goals. With the help of the Tuition and Fee Waiver I did not have to focus on how I was going to pay for college, and I could focus on passing my classes and graduating.

Passing my classes was really hard, due to the fact that I was still homeless and trying to figure out how to balance transitioning from the foster care system into the world. Transitions for anyone can be traumatizing, especially for a foster youth. Most foster youth have aspirations to become something in life, but they are continually dealing with their past trauma while trying to get a college education. Please note that trauma can influence the educational outcomes for this population and many other populations that have experienced trauma.

On top of the past and current trauma I was dealing with while in college, I was struggling with passing my classes. I gave it my all, by going to additional tutoring, office hours, and joining study groups with other students. I even got tested so that I could receive services through the disability center at my college. No matter what I did I still struggled to pass my classes, and it took me almost 6 years to get my Bachelor's degree. If the tuition and fee waiver had not been an option until I pulled up my GPA, I am not for sure that I would be standing before you today with a degree advocating for this population.

I do not have a mom or dad to pay for my education after being in the foster care system for 10 years. I have always viewed the State of Texas as my legal guardian. Parenting in my eyes does not stop at age 18 or even at the age of 21. Again, my dream has always been to provide more opportunities for others in my situation, in hopes of not creating more obstacles. I hope you feel this same way.



In closing, if this bill passes more foster youth will fall into the negative statistics of being homeless, incarcerated, or pregnant and this will be an even bigger cost on our society. According to the McArthur Foundation, roughly 20,000 youth in a given year within the United States age out of foster care and are on their own, often with limited family ties. Young people who have grown up in foster care have experienced a lot of instability in their lives and “often have learning disabilities, limited life skills, and health, emotional, and behavioral problems’ that lead to negative developmental outcomes (Foster & Gifford, 2004, p.1) Having aged out of the foster care system, they may be confused, nervous about course work and grades, and struggling financially (Courtney, 2009). This is why you should consider excluding this population from the proposed legislation and providing more of a chance for youth to thrive as college students without having to fearing their waivers will be taken away if they don’t pass their classes. Sometimes the Tuition and Fee Waiver is their only hope of providing a life for themselves.

Thank you.

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