

Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Committee on Health and Human Services
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Testimony on HB64
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Good Morning, Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Driehaus, and members of the Committee. My name is Amanda Davis, and I was adopted after four years in the foster care system. Many in the child welfare field have referred to me as a success story. In many ways I am. I am 27 years old, have a college degree, am married and own a home. While you may not find that to be anything significant, in the foster care system achievements such as these are rare. The sad truth for those who have aged out of the foster care system without permanency is that they face the reality of homelessness, poor education, early pregnancy along with increased rates of mental illness. I am here today because I truly believe that we have a chance to make a difference in the lives of youth in care. We have the opportunity to help provide stable and permanent homes for every child that deserves it.

My journey from foster care to today did not go without its struggles. I give so much credit to a committed case worker who believed my sister and I deserved a forever home. I was nine years old when I came into care and was over 11 when placed for adoption. In foster care, children over a certain age are considered hard to place in adoptive homes. A young girl with great grades, who liked swimming, dancing and to sing to the Spice Girls was considered hard to place because of her age. Being put up for adoption was extremely terrifying, but having a worker that was committed to finding a home for my sister and I made some of those very uncertain and dark days better. My worker showed dedication to the belief that I deserved a family, and a year and a half later my adoption was finalized in Franklin County.

It saddens me that many of my friends who have been through the foster care system did not have a happy ending to childhood like I did. The stories told of my fellow alumni that aged out of care have true tales of struggle, pain and despair. No matter what the situation was, many times it all came back to that individual not having people or resources to fall back on. These are the connections and resources they could have made had they been able to achieve permanency while in foster care.

I have had the honor to be able to train foster parents and social workers through the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program. One of our new initiatives through county public children services agencies is a pilot on

permanency roundtables. The permanency roundtables offers child welfare workers the chance to focus on expediting permanency while considering all possibilities to find a home for youth. As a member of the steering committee on these trainings, I have been able to hear the success they have been having around the state. Along with the success, however, there are limitations. By having more funding, permanency can more often be the first consideration when a child comes into care. The situation that is meant to be temporary may in fact be temporary, instead of a long term home. Youth may be able to belong to a family instead of having a system be their parent. With increased funding and support we will be able to see more success stories like mine.

As you consider the budget, please remember the important work that our public children services agencies do every day for youth like that little girl I once was. Please support the biennial budget increase so more youth can find their forever home. Thank you, and I am open to any questions.