

Chair and Members of the Committee –

My name is Ziigwan Frazer. I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager with Foster Advocates. I am a mother, a Foster, and a previous recipient of the Fostering Independence Grant.

As a Foster, you work harder than the average peer to obtain and experience experiences that everyone should be afforded. You have sleepless nights, long days, and little room for dreaming. Your focus is on where you'll lay your head, what and when your next meal will be, how do you overcome the generational cycle and be more than what you've been given.

The Fostering Independence Grant has created a world where dreaming is possible for Fosters in our state. I shared with a Foster who recently exited care, that even though things may be dark and confusing in this time, one thing the state has committed to, is providing you access to higher education without additional barriers. With this bill in front of us today, I now get to tell her, but your dreams may have to be waitlisted. **Have your dreams ever been put on a waitlist?**

I know money doesn't grow on trees, as Fosters we know this painfully well. That premise though, does not negate the promise that was made to Fosters, the state's children, **our** children. A promise to care for you as you dream and obtain goals that before this program did not seem fathomable. As a state and as those who sit in positions of perceived power, you get to choose, who and what to prioritize. **Why is it that our community is always an afterthought, when we should be a forethought?**

You have the opportunity today, to find a will to make a way as we Fosters have had to do our whole lives. There is no room for excuses when those in our community will face the harsh reality of impending homelessness, losing access to childcare, and no longer able to afford some of their most basic needs. FIG has been a lifeline for many, a light at the end of a very long tunnel. Please do not dim that light.

# foster advocates

March 12, 2024

I urge and ask you to correct the shortfall, find and provide the necessary funding to support the original legislation. To fulfill your promise and duty to Fosters, our children. It is never too late to do the right thing.

Ziigwan Frazer, Policy and Advocacy Manager

**Foster Advocates**

