

2/19/2021

Attn: Appropriations Committee

Dear members of the Appropriations Committee,

This is part of my testimony in support of the Governor's budget, which preserves and expands funding for the Homeless Youth line item.

I was in and out of DCF my whole life, I was living with my mom on and off between the ages of 18-21. We never had a good relationship and got into a really bad fight one day. Long story short she kicked me out and had the sheriff come serve me papers. I was couch surfing for a while, barley eating and carrying my clothes in a small duffle bag. I eventually lost my job due to being emotionally drained and decided to call 211 for help.

When I got into the connection it was a dream come true. The Connection is funded by this line item. I thought by calling 211 that I would be able to get into a shelter or something. I never thought that I would be in a program that helped me as much as they did. I was able to look for my own apartment with the help of my case worker Genise Jones, they set me up with a bed and a living room set with a dining table which was nice because it makes the environment feel more like home. Once I got my own place my mind set started to change from tired and uneasy to happy and grateful. I was able to get another job and go back to school. I also had a place for me and my daughter to sleep safely. I didn't have to drag my clothes with me everywhere and I was able to be comfortable for once. Being able to walk into my own place after the road I've been down is by far the best feeling for me.

The connection helped me get ready to financially support myself. I was also able to get my own car and reach some goals. I would not have been able to reach my goals without a stable environment. I now work for All State and I'm still in school. I have been out of the program now for almost 4 months. I am stable and able to pay my rent, my car note and all of my other bills. They were able to be that steppingstone for me, I'm not sure if I would have had the means to get back on my feet as fast as I did without their help. As well as everyone's help from the people at 211 to the people who conducted my interview. They were all a big help. These programs are vital for homeless youth to grow and succeed. I one day hope to be a part of the giving back process.

Special thank you to Genise my case worker and everyone at the connection for helping me every step of the way!

Thank you for hearing my story and for your continued support to homeless young adults.

Sincerely,

Ashlea Deberry (Bridgeport, CT)