

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 1008
AN ACT CONCERNING LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR CHILDREN IN CERTAIN PROCEEDINGS IN
THE SUPERIOR COURT
JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
February 16, 2023

To the Committee on Children:

Since I was 11 years old, DCF has been in my life. They have been the one constant factor. My mom, aunt and the rest of my family has always been in and out of my life. I got to where I am today, my second extended stay at Manson Youth Institution, because my life at home was messed up. DCF let me go back with my mom and things weren't working out. She kept kicking me out and so I didn't want to stay with her; I was angry and I just didn't care about things anymore. I went back into care with DCF, got mixed up with the wrong kids, and did some really bad things that ended up getting me in trouble.

By the time I turned 18, I still hadn't been returned home or adopted. I no longer had a lawyer to help me understand my DCF case, even though I remained in extended foster care. Shortly after that, DCF wanted to kick me out because I was locked up. They were threatening to take away all that I had – visits from my DCF social worker (my only contact with the outside world) and my case manager at the jail; my stipend to fill my canteen and help me get by; and the constant supervision I had been getting for the last several years, which helped keep me focused on life after Manson. Thankfully, my case manager at MYI contacted voluntary lawyers from the Center for Children's Advocacy, and they were able to stop DCF from closing my case, something I wouldn't have been able to do on my own. After that, my volunteer lawyer has been able to help me get appropriate schooling at MYI and provide a contact for me on the outside. I can't imagine not having her looking out for me during these difficult years as I try to grow into an independent adult.

Other kids who are turning 18 that are still involved with DCF should have the right to a lawyer too. Even though we may be considered adults, we still need and deserve a lawyer who knows us to help us understand our rights, talk with DCF, advocate for us, and give us hope and confidence. I hope that you support S.B. 309 and help support youth like me reach our potential.

Sincerely,

Joshua from Bridgeport