

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to share with you my experience in foster care. My name is Brittany Bullock and I live in Conyngham, PA with my parents Michael and Lorine Ogurkis. I aged out of foster care in Luzerne County. I was placed in foster care at the age of 9. I was separated from my 5 siblings who all went into different foster homes to live. It was traumatic for me, not only did I have to leave my mother and the house that I grew up in, but I was also forced to leave my siblings.

When in foster care, I went to 5 different schools:

Hunlock Creek Elementary for 2 years

Dan Flood Elementary for 1 year and a half

Solomon Plains for 2 years

Cyber School from home for 3 years -9th through 11th grade

James M. Coughlin-1 year (my graduating year- 2012

It is hard to put into words what it meant to have to re-start my life, over and over and over again. New places, new faces- not able to make the connections with people because as soon as I started to feel comfortable, I was forced to move again. It interrupted my schooling, it interrupted my education, it interrupted my life.

The stigma of being in “foster care” or being a “foster child” is a hard label to wear- people made me feel like I was second- hand, worthless, what made me unlovable? Every time I started a new school, I was forced to repeat the story over and over again. Kids are not afraid to ask, why are you here, who do you live with, and I am labeled.

My constant moving from school to school did not allow me to create the connections I needed so desperately to have as a child. I was always the new student. I could not create friendships, I could not play on sports, I became socially awkward and shy. I was cyber-schooled for 3 years from a foster care home. Imagine you missing out on all the dances, the games, the school-lunches, the friends, missing out on my life that I should have been able to have through no fault of my own.

I am respectfully requesting you to move to adopt this bill in order to prevent foster care agencies from moving children out of their home school district unless for extreme circumstances and only through a court order. I am also requesting the same for cyber-schooling. Unless child psychologists can persuade a judge to allow a child to be home-schooled or cyber-schooled, only then should this be allowed to occur.

