



Regional Budget Hearings 2017

When you arrive: You will sign up to speak outside the hearing and receive a number; people will speak in the order of the sign up. If you multiply your number by 3 (the minutes each person before you will have), you'll get an idea of how long you will need to wait until your turn. Pay attention when your number gets close – legislators ask for speakers to be ready to hop up as soon as their name is called (also pay attention for your name—they don't always get the pronunciation correct...).

Remember: the legislators at these hearings are members of the money committees—they are holding hearings to learn what the public thinks about the budget, what's in it now, and what kind of budget they'd like to see come out of the 2017 session. A few things that all budget testimony should include:

- First, make sure to introduce yourself and what city/town you live in before you begin.
- If you use the talking points below, you do not have to include all of them in your statement: pick 2 or 3 main points, and if possible, illustrate your point with a personal example that represents youth who stay with community and family in a positive light.
- Always have a clear “ask.” In this case, we are asking legislators to continue their commitment to investing in community-based supports for juvenile-justice-involved youth.
- Be sure to keep strictly under the 3-minute time limit: there will be a timer on site, and you will be cut off if you go over. It's best PRACTICE and to time yourself ahead of time, and leave yourself a cushion of time to account for reading slowly, etc.
- That said: take your time – speak or read your statement clearly and not too fast. Speak into the microphone.
- When you conclude, be sure to THANK legislators for their time.

Talking Points on Fostering Futures

- **First, we want to thank you for all the work you have done to improve the lives of Virginia’s children in the foster care system, specifically the Fostering Futures program. We ask that you maintain funding adopted into the budget for the “Fostering Futures” program, which allows Virginia to offer transition-to-independence services and adoption assistance for older youth up to age 21.** The Commonwealth has struggled—more than any other state—to connect youth in foster care to permanent families before they “age out” of the system, at which point they face high risk of homelessness, unemployment, poor health outcomes and possible involvement in the criminal justice system. Fostering Futures provides critical, proven-effective supports—including housing and casework support.
- **There are already dozens of youth currently benefitting from Fostering Futures.** One young person in the program is currently enrolled at Virginia Commonwealth University and fostering Futures allows her foster parents to continue to receive financial support while they are supporting her in college. Her permanent placement will remain with the foster parents and she will live in the dorms while at school. The maintenance payments received by the foster parents will give them the means to support her in school with spending money, toiletries, clothing, car expenses, etc. Fostering Futures also provides a mechanism for her to return to her placement in the foster home should she need to take a break from college and be able to be in the foster home for school breaks, summer, etc.