



Attn: Committee Clerk Angie Lake  
517-373-5795  
alake@house.mi.gov

11/11/2014

Dear Ms. Lake,

I am writing this letter in support of HB 5775; The Foster Child Identification Theft Protection Bill. As a foster care case manager I would like to express how important it is for this bill to be passed as it serves the best interest of the youth in foster care. As we work to ensure the safety and wellbeing of youth currently in foster care we also need to work towards ensuring the wellbeing of these youth once they leave foster care; including allowing them to achieve a level of adult independence-many of us take for granted.

Requiring case managers, such as myself, to request a credit report of the youth on our case loads is a key component of this bill and vital to ensuring the independence of the youth in foster care once they leave the foster care system. Speaking from experience, requesting a credit report takes less than 15 minutes of a case managers time and provides vital information of if and when a youths identifying data was used.

Unfortunately, youth in foster care are too often taken advantage of by their birth families, foster families, and helping professionals. I have personally worked with foster care youth and alumni who have been negatively affected as a result of a loved one using their social security number, credit, or identity. There are far too many stories to share in depth but allow me to share one story that has stayed with me throughout my career.

*While I was finishing up my BSW degree I worked at a homeless shelter as a part time case manager. One day a 19 year old female came into the shelter for an intake. While working with her I learned she had aged out the foster care system and had no positive social support system. This young lady was very proud of herself for obtaining employment at a local factory and when she refused to loan the friend she was staying with money she was told by the friend she had to leave the friend's home. This young lady attempted to lease a one bedroom apartment near her job. Unfortunately, she was consistently denied by apartments and leasing authorities due to having bad credit. Upon investigating her bad credit situation the youth learned her maternal aunt, used her social security number on the aunt's utility bills. The aunt did not pay the bills, they went into default, and eventually to a debt collector. This all happened before the youth turned 15 years old.*

HB 5775 is a preventive measure to protect foster youth from experiencing situations such as the young lady's mentioned above.

In conclusion, foster youth are at risk of their identities being stolen or their social security numbers being used to take out debts that they are not even old enough to take out. The consequences of allowing foster youth to be taken advantage of by the people entrusted to care for them is absolutely detrimental to the wellbeing and adult independence of these youth. HB 5775 is a starting point to protect the identity of foster youth and take away one of the many barriers foster youth face as they enter adulthood and independence.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Corey Soper'.

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*Hope flows through us.*