

**SUPPORT – SB 207: Unaccompanied Minors in Need of Shelter –
Consent to Shelter and Supportive Service**

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, February 5, 2020

Testimony of LaKeisha Short

Hello Committee:

My name is LaKeisha Short, and I am 23-year-old youth of the Youth Empowered Society also known as the Yes Drop-in Center located in Baltimore, Maryland. I am writing you not only on the behalf myself, but also on the behalf of the youth with the same struggles and background who are also seen at the center; young people who are experiencing homelessness.

I am in support of SB 207 because this bill can allow young people access to the basic needs of functional clothing, hygiene products, healthcare assistance, connections to employment, access to vital documents, and even opportunities for housing. All of which, I believe are human rights that even someone as young as 14 years old should have admittance to and the opportunity to navigate on his or her own when coming from difficult upbringings.

Access to providers at shelters and supportive services allow a young person an alternative to traditional agencies. It could allow youth to connect to possible mentorship and guidance that they may lack in their home settings, verses other alternatives. Those alternatives often being a young person who will be vulnerable to exploitation, unsafe living conditions, possible drug use, mental health issues, and school drop-out rates.

I ask for your support of a bill that could help prevent all that. A bill that could help with providing unaccompanied youth who are facing coldness at night and heat exhaustion in the summers. You could help support a young person who does not have access to showers and food, proper healthcare, and basic necessities. I encourage you to be creative in how you approach issues of homelessness – give young people alternatives to how they can escape homes not fit for them, access to resources that can provide stability, and hope for different futures.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Lakeisha Short

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