

Brian Foster

June 10, 2010

House Committee on Juvenile Delinquency & Alternatives to Placement

Good Morning ladies and gentlemen, thank you for having me testify and share my story today. My name is Brian Foster and I am a founding member of the Chester High School Youth Court and a current member of its executive board. To start off, the youth court played an important role in my development as a leader. Before I started youth court, helping a fellow student to make better decisions was not on my agenda. Before I started youth court, I was more of a knucklehead who was bent on looking out for myself than helping other people. I stayed in trouble most of my life, getting suspended all of the time was normal for me. I always had an "I don't care" attitude because I did not care about anything or anyone. I was not a social person and I also had temper problem that got me into some trouble.

I found out about youth court from school resource officer Timothy Jones. At first, I did not want to join youth court but my attitude changed once I was introduced to the goals of youth court. I liked how the youth court helped students learn from their mistakes instead of just suspending them. The mentality of the students at school is that because it is so easy to be suspended, it is not a big deal. The students do not care if they are suspended because they do not want to be at school anyway, being suspended is more of a treat than a punishment. Instead of suspending students, the youth court makes students take responsibility for their actions and realize that their actions affect others.

Youth court helped me find a talent that I never knew I had, I became more social and more tolerant of other people. I became more helpful like making sure respondents are doing well with their dispositions, checking up on them in school by just saying hi or asking

them how their life is going. I took on these responsibilities before I even became a member of the executive board.

Youth court means a lot to me, I want to be able to give students a second chance like I was given a second chance. Last year while I was a member of youth court, I got in trouble and was almost sent to juvenile detention because a student was being beaten up and I did not give information to the teachers who stepped in to find out what happened. Although I was not involved, I was punished like the students who were physically involved in the altercation. Luckily, I was given a second chance because being sent to juvenile detention would have changed everything. I would have been put in the same place I was in before youth court. I would have been angry and I would have continued to act out towards people because I would not have anything to care about anymore. Basically it would have put me in a hopeless position.

I plan on finishing high school strong by continuing my work with youth court and I want to encourage other students to join youth court and to make decisions that will benefit them because they have a chance to improve themselves like I did. After graduation I plan on going to college to be an audio engineer.