
**Testimony of
Tyrone O. Obaseki M.A, LPC-I
Before the
Texas Sunset Advisory Commission
Austin, Texas
June 24th -25th, 2014**

TDFPS - Paradigm Shift

I would like to thank the Commission for this opportunity to Provide a testimony on issues related to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

By profession, I am a licensed professional counselor currently employed in the capacity of an intern, for Angel Reach, a non- profit transitional living home in Conroe, Texas. By cause, demand, and need, I am also the founder of a non-profit organization called Impact Youth America and the co- founder of a newly organized child welfare advocacy group named B.R.A.V.E.

By experience, I am a young man who lived a very peripatetic childhood as a former ward of the court. It was a stressful 18 years oscillating back and forth between foster homes, group homes and psychiatric hospitals, however I have chosen to create a better environment for foster youth aging out behind me.

I am present today anticipating that you would receive a heightened understanding regarding what needs to be done to address the many issues plaguing child welfare here in the state of Texas.

After reading this year's Sunset Advisory Commission Staff report on the Department of Family and Protective Services and comparing it to the Sunset Staff Report released in 1996, I am disappointed that we are currently struggling to address the same issues. I believe the true problem lies in the state's unwillingness to take heed and implement the changes that are needed to truly reform the system.

I believe the Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report did a thorough job at addressing what needs to take place on the surface level. However, where is the congruency between the changes that are needed on the ground level and what is being presented on Capitol Hill? It seems to me that we are stuffing ourselves full of Jason's Deli, having round table discussions, appointing committees, interviewing self-proclaimed "child welfare" experts and nothing is being done to turn the tide for our young people! What needs to be addressed is how a young man can go from being mentally retarded to a mental health clinician, motivational speaker and mentor for young people. According to my DFPS case file I am mentally retarded, schizophrenic, bipolar, emotionally disturbed, learning disabled, and an individual who suffers from ADHD and intermittent explosive disorder. Based on the interactions that I have had with other former foster youth, I am not the only one who the state has written off as "special" or "mentally ill". Perhaps we should start

Problem #3: Young people in foster care are not receiving adequate support from mentors.

Solution: More efforts need to be in place to bridge connections with the churches, fraternities, and people of the community to support and encourage our young people entrusted to the state of Texas. Houston, Texas is one of the largest cities in the U.S and there is poor representation of child advocates. To ensure each youth has a mentor DFPS needs to allow successful outside mentor programs to mentor youth who are in care. Although DFPS operates as the umbrella organization to facilitate the needs of our youth, it seems as if the agency rejects outside organizations all for the sake of confidentiality. DFPS should establish continuity with Texas CASA so that every child under state care has a consistent person that loves them and treats them with kindness.

Problem# 4: There are individuals in position of authority who are not percipient of what is truly going on in the lives of the children thus perpetuating the cycle of abuse.

Solution:

State representatives and all individuals who are in positions of authority should be required to visit and engage with the children entrusted to the state of Texas. To better ensure their protection and show the youth that the State of Texas truly cares, an event should take place every year so young people in care can engage with decision makers.

Respectfully Submitted By,



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