

1.) Greeting and Introductions:

Dear Director Kara Wente,

Thank you so much for inviting foster care youth and alumni to share what went well during our time in foster care and/or what would have made our experiences better.

My name is _____, and I am a *current/former foster youth*. I serve in (name the roles).

2.) Focus on One Topic, and What Needs to Be Improved:

For the purpose of this *letter (or video message)*, I am going to focus on _____.

3.) Share a Positive Example (if desired):

For example, if the topic were group homes, one youth leader recently shared that:

Group homes can be uncomfortable, but the people and staff can make the experience better if they truly care for every individual in the group home. In one of the group homes where I stayed, they prioritized extra-curricular activities, holidays and taking us on fun trips out of state. I would not be the person I am today without the care and structure that were provided inside of that particular group home.

This could be followed by suggestions on how to improve other group homes to follow this group home's example.

4.) Share a Negative Example, Paired with What Would Have Made Things Better:

For example, if the topic were group homes, youth leaders recently shared that:

- Group home staff need to be trained more on how to interact with teens and how to avoid favoritism. They need to share equal love and attention to everyone. Group home staff need training, and youth could have a voice in that training.
- The state of Ohio needs to improve group homes. They need to have an in-home therapist. The state should provide group homes with supports to meet QRTP requirements. Higher standards will protect us from low quality experiences.

This could be followed by topics to include in training or other detailed recommendations.

5.) Close With a Message of Gratitude and Inspiration:

Thank you so much for taking the time to *read/listen* to my testimony. Here in the state of Ohio, we can improve the immediate experiences and long-term outcomes of Ohio foster youth, and I would love to be a part of that solution.