



Terrance Hooker's CPS Board of Education Testimony

Young Fatherhood

December 16, 2009

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TESTIMONY OF TERRANCE HOOKER ON BEHALF OF THE ILLINOIS CAUCUS FOR ADOLESCENT HEALTH

Before CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regarding YOUNG FATHERHOOD

My name is Terrance Hooker. I am 19 years old, a student at Triton College, and, most importantly, a proud father of Rodney Hooker, my 2-year-old son. I am here today to give my testimony about my experience as a young father.

I became a father at the age of 17. When I learned that I would be the father of my girlfriend's child, I was slightly shocked, yet I fully understood the consequences of my actions. I took a deep breath and my heart skipped a beat. We sat down together and I made a list of what I needed to do, what she needed to do and what we needed to do together. From that point on, my son became my first priority. Being a young father is not an easy thing. Not only am I a full-time father, but I am also a part-time employee and a part-time student. As a young father, I have dealt with negative criticism from my male (and female) peers, discouragement from school staff, personal doubt, stereotypes and financial and emotional problems.

The Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health, also known as ICAH, has given me the opportunity to speak at this hearing today. ICAH has a group called the Young Parent Alliance which advocates for programs and services in Chicago Public Schools that help pregnant and parenting youth complete their education. Before becoming a member of the Young Parent Alliance in 2008, I did not know my rights as a young father. Now, I know that young mothers and fathers should have equal rights to take care of their child and be treated fairly by their schools.

Although it is difficult to have a child at an early age, it is more difficult to raise a child without an education. Being responsible for someone else is a tedious task. Someone said, "A father is a son's first hero and a daughter's first love." Anybody can be a biological father, but it takes a responsible man to be a father. Once again, thank you for having me here today to share my story and let my voice be heard.

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