



(Andrea Moyer far right with fellow speakers outside the U.S. Capitol)

Transcript of Andrea Moyer's testimony at the GU Congressional Briefing on Policies Impacting Grandparent Caregivers and Children in Foster Care.

Andrea is a young woman from Des Moines, Iowa who left foster care to live with relatives.

My parents were 15 years old when I was born and my dad's parents basically took us in. I loved living with my whole family, I was especially close to my grandpa. We rode horses almost every day and [I] talked for hours. I asked him questions, how was I born and how it was in the olden days and stuff like that. He always came up with these long-winded stories, those answers, and I really loved him for his sense of humor.

Over the next seven years life was really wonderful, my parents had 2 more children and I loved being a big sister. I really felt lucky, I was doing well in school and I had the support of everyone and was a very confident little girl.

But what I didn't know was that my parents had taken up a terrible drug addiction. Looking back it was obvious, mood swings, sleeping for days at a time, and eventually being gone for days at a time. From what I understand my grandparents were putting a lot of pressure on my dad to get his act together and take responsibility for us kids. With no intentions of quitting drugs however, he moved our family out.

Within a year they were both in jail and my dad was on his way to prison, we were placed in emergency foster care and as far as I know no one contacted anyone in my family to see if they could take care of myself and my 2 brothers.

We stayed with the first family for a few months, but a job transfer left us on our way to our next. The instability was taking its toll and I started having some behavioral problems. It was very difficult for me to accept that these strangers were in charge of my brothers; I thought they were my responsibility and they shouldn't be disciplined by them. So I was removed from the home and they were adopted.

A few families later I was with the Brummels. I wanted to be part of their family and they wanted me. The department of human services and the family said that adoption was the only way that they could keep me. I truly did love them, but I just thought that if I changed my last name and moved on with this family I'd forget who I was; I'd forget my mom and dad, my grandparents and my brothers, and maybe they'd forget me too. And I just couldn't do it. They basically sat me down and we had a family meeting and they told me it's all or nothing. I can be part of their family and be adopted or I can... leave. I chose nothing and I was 12. From then on it was basically more of the same, 1 placement after the next. I'll spare you the details and just say that half of them were safe and good the other half were not.

It wasn't until I was emancipated at 17 when I finally returned to my grandparents and it wasn't until then that I found out why they couldn't have taken us in the first place. It was so simple. They just couldn't afford 3 young children on a fixed income. I'd just like to end by saying that the single most difficult question I've ever had to answer is 'where are you from?' I don't think I was ever really in any place long enough to be from there. And I just wanted to share my remarks with you so that young people would have the opportunities that I did not have.