When youth are being placed in a shelter designed for them to be able to rely on when a crisis comes up, they need a place to that has a safe and comfortable environment. Being placed in a shelter with peers who are going through similar situations as themselves, it makes it easier for the youth to connect with others. If someone comes into a shelter not knowing what will happen to them while they are there, more likely than not, they’re going to be scared and very anxious. For me, when I was placed in a shelter I know I was scared out of my mind because my first night in that shelter one of the youth staying there was flipping out. They were throwing things around and threatening the staff as well as the other peers. I felt like the staff were not doing anything to stop the youth’s behavior. Later I learned that the staff couldn’t do anything to get the kid to stop because they weren’t trained to do so.

As a youth who knows what it feels like to have those things take place, I believe that the majority of the youth who are in shelters want a safe, home-like environment to be in when they aren’t able to go home for certain reasons. Staff are supposed to be there to provide protection, safety, and still be able to keep family connections for the youth. They are there to help the youth with the situations that they’re in and when youth with mental health situations comes into the shelter, waiting for an opening in treatment center, when they start acting up it causes a lot of disruptions in the whole day, sometimes even the week. These disruptions also make visits with family more tense than they already are. The staff are supposed to be there to keep the youth in the community and connected with their family. If one of the kid acts up, it takes away from the rest of them, both fun, the connections, and help from the staff. Then activities get canceled, when the fun things get taken away the youth get mad because they aren’t getting to do fun things all because of the one kid’s behavior and the youth start to feel like the staff don’t listen.

The youth all around you who have family problems or any issues that are causing the youth to end up in these shelters, don’t need any more stressful issues from other peers and the certainly don’t want to be ignored. Youth in these situations need staff that are trained properly and to keep the feeling of the shelter as a positive and welcoming place that can always be more than just a shelter, but that it would be a new path to the start to a new way of life that they can rely on. That’s is why I am up here today, I am asking for your help to make the futures brighter for the youth today. These are the youth who are going to be the future adults of this country and they will look back and remember this, they will base their decisions then, on the decisions that you make for them today.