My First Senate Testimony: Medicaid to 21

Samuel Martin

“There’s only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving and that’s your own self.”

~Aldous Huxley

I am very involved with public speaking and on January 22, for the first time, I spoke in front of the Washington State Senate, in Olympia, on behalf of Senate Bill 5305: Medicaid to 21. I got to witness a hearing on a few bills that were selected to have the opportunity to move on to the next step in the process. It was quite the experience to go and share my story of foster-care and impeding “aging-out” concerns to these senators. Another part of it was sharing my experience is because I aspire to be a politician one day. I have been taking an American Government class at Seattle Central Community College and find politics very interesting. I have engaged in some amazing discussions and put myself around a lot of people who are thinking about the world around them. Visiting Olympia and seeing what the setting is like there opened my eyes to a completely different structure and way of being.

Going to see the Senate has motivated me to join the Black Student Union (BSU). I also plan to run for class president at my high school which will not only be beneficial for me as a possible career path, but it helps me understand the world around me and how I can affect change. Knowing I have the power to affect change is one of the main reasons I went to the Senate to speak on Senate Bill 5305, and I why I will continue to be involved in my community. I have a stand and that stand is Courageous Impact. That’s what I believe in. Like all the “super heroes” on T.V., I’m here to help those in need and do some good in the world.

The Mockingbird Society: The Story of a Name

Chereese Phillips

Dr. HaCKett Joins The Mockingbird Society

Wanda Hackett, who holds a doctorate in Human and Organizational Systems, joins The Mockingbird Society (TMS) as Programs Manager. The Mockingbird Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to building a world-class foster care system by reaching their 18th birthday without being adopted or reunited with their birth family. The vast majority of these youth will lose critical health care coverage at age 19, despite the fact that federal law allows Washington State to offer coverage to these youth until age 21. This proposal would take advantage of this federal option.

Significant Health Problems

Children in foster care often suffer from health problems greater than those of homeless or very poor children who live at home; as they grow older they are often at serious risk of health problems due to early neglect, prenatal drug exposure, and the results of conditions left untreated in the first three years of life. Mental health issues from health problems greater than those of homeless or very poor children who live at home; as they grow older they are often at serious risk of health problems due to early neglect, prenatal drug exposure, and the results of conditions left untreated in the first three years of life. Mental health issues among foster youth persist into adulthood and rates of mental health problems among foster care alumni are significantly higher than those in the general population.

Few Other Opportunities for Health Insurance

Insurance though employment is rarely available for this population, as less than half of former foster youth (ages 20-33) are employed, and half of those employed were still earning wages equal to or below the federal poverty level. Yet a third of foster care alumni had no health insurance—double the national uninsured rate for people of similar ages. A Growing Trend

Since 1999, federal law has given states the option to extend Medicaid to former foster youth. Currently, 12 states have adopted this expansion, including states as diverse as California, Mississippi, Indiana, Texas, and New Jersey.

A Small Cost with Future Savings

The lack of health care coverage for this population is not only unfair, given that many young adults with working parents are covered into their 20s, but it is costly. Without medical support, former foster youth, who often have significant health care needs, may end up using expensive services for primary care, such as emergency rooms, may elect not to receive medical treatment, necessitating more expensive care later, and may also, end up in jail, public assistance, or living on the streets. The cost of Medicaid expansion would be shared evenly between the federal government and Washington State, covering hundreds of youth with significant federal financial support.

Extending Medicaid to Foster Care Youth Aging Out of Care

SB 5305 and HB 1201

Passport to Promise

Program

Chereese Phillips

Creative Corner:

Paradise

Jadelle M

Creative Corner:

One Day Thirteen Years Ago

Jadelle Abi Diallo

Creative Corner:

Letter 2 My Unborn

Raqel Granath

Wake Up! HIV/AIDS Is Killing Us!

Raqel Granath

Black History Month

Calendar of Events

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-KIDS (5437)
Sephora Welcomes Mockingbird

“bird.” The Sephora logo is a long, thin $S$ that is made to look like a long strand of wavy hair. It is commonly known as the Sephora flame.1

Sephora approached The Mockingbird Society when a former employee brought up the idea to the organization after making several visits and seeing the work that we do. At this event, Sephora will be showing foster and runaway youth how to apply make-up which will be instructed by professional make-up artists. We will then have the chance to practice on each other. There will also be a brief presentation about the event about Sephora’s plans to help support their community. I will be sure to update our next month about how much fun we all had.

I-3) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephora

Treehouse Referrals

Don’t forget to ask your social worker to make a new Treehouse referral for 2007. All youth must have current referrals on file to receive any Treehouse services this year.

Thank You!

Mollie Alyaward; Don & Goldie Silverman; Helen Laker; Schultz Family Foundation; Sessions Family Foundation; Social Venture Funds; Lynn DiMarco, Sherry Williams, & Technology Access Foundation; Bruce Cross & Perkins Coie; Dave Schoolcraft & Miller Nash LLP; Chris Marsh, Attorney; Anna Trombley, People of Color Against Aids Network (POCAAN)

The Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

What if we created an organization, a community, indeed a world, in which our most vulnerable children and youth were protected and valued? The same commitment that Atticus had for mockingbirds?

Join The Mockingbird Society today and help us give young people a safe place to nest and sing.

ABOUT US: The Mockingbird Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation developing innovative models for improving the outcomes of foster care, while advocating with decision makers for system reform. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please consult your tax advisor regarding your specific tax situation. The Mockingbird Times is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of The Mockingbird Society are paid between $7.63 and $8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, poetry, and art to the publication. Donations to The Mockingbird Society may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the Mockingbird Times may be reproduced without the written permission of The Mockingbird Society. All contents copyright ©2006, The Mockingbird Society.

Become a Member of The Mockingbird Society

We welcome you to join us in making a difference in the lives of our nation’s most vulnerable children, youth, and families. As a supporter, you’ll receive a monthly edition of The Mockingbird Times. Thank you for your contribution.

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY STATE ZIP
PHONE E-MAIL

Enclosed, please find my check made payable to The Mockingbird Society in the amount of (please note amount on appropriate line):

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- My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.
- I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.
- Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

Please mail this completed form and your check to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South, Suite 240, Seattle, WA 98144. For questions or more information, call (206) 323-KIDS (5437) or visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org.
the lives of children and youth.

MT: What is your history with working with families, youth and young adults?

Dr. H: More than 30 years ago, my first job after graduating from the University of Washington was as a childhood educator was working with children and families. I’ve always been an advocate for social issues that are in the best interest for children, youth and families.

MT: What goals do you have for TMS in your new position?

Dr. H: My vision for the Mockingbird Family Model—an innovative way to support foster care and permanency for children and youth in the foster care system—is that the model is recognized as a successful way to mitigate the disproportionate representation of children of color in child welfare systems across Washington State, the nation and internationally.

MT: Why are you most looking forward to in your new position?

Dr. H: I looked forward to working with The Mockingbird Society Youth LEAD representatives and watch them grow and develop into outstanding young men and women.

MT: How has your experience been so far?

Dr. H: My first three weeks have been fabulous! I’m having a great time and enjoying every minute of my work at The Mockingbird Society!
The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.

- Alice Walker

**Wakeup! AIDS/HIV is Killing Us**

Raquel Granath

This epidemic has taken the lives of 25 million people since it was first discovered in 1981. It is transmitted at the rate of 6,000 new infections per day in young people alone.¹ It doesn’t discriminate race, gender or age. It is faceless but its rings are heard in the hearts of many: AIDS. Of those who contract it, only 25% will live past the age of 45.²

February is Black History Month and it is the duty of the black community to educate themselves and create awareness about this virus which claims so many lives. Black women only make up 13% of the population, and yet they represented 67% of AIDS diagnoses in 2005.³ What is wrong with this picture? Why is our culture threatened more than any other racial group? How can we make the resolution to end the grief caused by this killer?

Poverty is a huge underlying issue behind AIDS. A black man is 8 times poorer than his white counterpart and therefore less educated and more likely to contract the disease. In fifteen states, over half of the HIV population is black, including eight states in the poor, rural south.³

Unfortunately, too many people are afflicted with this disease. Especially our women. AIDS is the number one killer of African American women between the ages of 25-34.⁴ A woman is more susceptible to being infected with HIV due to the fact that the virus can be absorbed into the tissue lining of the vaginal cavity. Subsequently, 63% of infant occurrences of HIV are transmitted to the baby during birth.⁵

Even so, we speak, there are around 10,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in King County.² They’re people from all walks of life: doctors, lawyers, waiters, and homeless people. They are living with this disease as it slowly manifests into death. Sometimes the ailing victim must take up to 20 different pills a day.² Each pill has different restrictions, so the patient may find themselves setting a timer every half an hour to take a pill. The most effective pill on the market today is called Atropila. It’s a once a day regimen designed to combine all the important medicines into one. It works by combatting the enzyme that the virus needs to reproduce. So far this is the best way to inhibit the disease. There is no cure.

I think that the pharmaceutical company is purposely holding your body vaccine to make a profit on patients,” says Ruth, a client advocate at POCAAN (People Of Color Against AIDS Network). Which could be true: Atropila, the medicine that will extend your life the longest, runs about $4,000 for a mere three month supply. Combine that with any other medications and treatments and you’re looking at over $20,000 in only one year.

Researching this topic under the pretense of writing an article posed a new challenge to me. I knew about HIV because we had taken Sexual Education in school, but I think I took for granted the impact it has on everyone. AIDS is worse than cancer. It’s contagious, spreads quickly, and kills millions every year. Reading the statistics on the Internet really wasn’t enough for me. Only when I saw the vacant expressions on the faces of children orphaned by AIDS and the destitution on the faces of dying victims did I realize: that could have been me. And suppose it was me or even you. Suppose you had to wake up every morning knowing that your days are numbered, knowing that the virus ravaging your body is highly stigmatized, misunderstood, and feared amongst those who don’t have it. Imagine the shame, guilt, fear, and loss of hope that these people must experience on a daily basis. By educating myself on the facts of this killer, I’ve been able to appreciate my life much more. But that’s not enough. We as a people must make a conscious effort to combat this. We must put an end to it. But how?

The first step is education. Be aware! Know how HIV can be transmitted and do everything you can to avoid it. Some people are at a higher risk than others based on the behaviors they partake in. Know the risks and make the choice to play it safe. Sexual contact and sharing needles are the top two ways to contract HIV. Be smart and take the right option.

Second is prevention. Everyone, especially young people, need to make good choices that can help combat the spread of this disease. The easiest way to go about this is to know: get tested. If you’re getting involved with someone intimately, go and get an HIV screening and use protection for the first six months. After that, get tested again to verify the results.

Knowledge is power. Know the facts, know how to be preventative, know your status, and know how to be empathetic. Appreciate your life and do what you can to preserve it. Do what you can to make a difference with the time you’re allotted. AIDS is a killer but with the help of our friends and common people such as ourselves, we WILL find a cure.

¹www.aewrt.org
²www.metrokc.gov/health/apu/epi/epireports.htm
³If you’re interested in advocating, lending support or if you want more information, please contact:

POCAAN
www.pocaan.org

PositiveVoice Washington
www.positivevoice.org

Lifelong AIDS Alliance
www.lifelongaidsalliance.org

Duneshue House
www.duneshuehouse.org

HIV/STD Hotline
206-205-7837

**Mockingbird Times, February 2007**

**Letter 2 My Unborn**

Raquel Granath

Wipe your tears little one
There’s no need to cry
Here comes the sun
The clouds are passing by
Your life is in your hands
Listen closely to your heart
Its time to take a stand
Don’t rely on others to do their part
Follow your dreams
You could do anything
Don’t suppress your screams
Express yourself, words give you wings
You know how it feels to want to die
But remember you are great
If you push yourself you can touch the sky
And there’s one more thing you must know
My love is pure as the driven snow
So stop your crying and have no fear
If you’re looking for answers
The search stops here

**Creative Corner**

**One Day: Thirteen Years**

Jomelle Abd-Rashaan

A tattoo has been on my mind
The color
the pain
my heart
my eyes
my mind
my name
my nickname
my first name
my middle name
my friends name
Thirteen years since the day I have seen her
That tattoo on my arm

**Correction**: In the January 07 issue of Mockingbird Times, the poem “Rain” was written by Mary Mogali. We apologize for the error.

**Festivals**


**Black to My Roots**: Friday-Saturday, 7:30 p.m.; Sundays, 3:30 p.m. through Feb. 24, Rainier Valley Cultural Center, 3515 S. Alaska St. Tickets: $9.50-$18.50; $9.50-$15.50; 206-325-6500 or www.ticketwindowonline.com.

**African American Museum**: Saturdays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; 1080 Pine St. Researching this topic under the pretense of writing an article posed a new challenge to me. I knew about HIV because we had taken Sexual Education in school, but I think I took for granted the impact it has on everyone. AIDS is worse than cancer. It’s contagious, spreads quickly, and kills millions every year. Reading the statistics on the Internet really wasn’t enough for me. Only when I saw the vacant expressions on the faces of children orphaned by AIDS and the destitution on the faces of dying victims did I realize: that could have been me. And suppose it was me or even you. Suppose you had to wake up every morning knowing that your days are numbered, knowing that the virus ravaging your body is highly stigmatized, misunderstood, and feared amongst those who don’t have it. Imagine the shame, guilt, fear, and loss of hope that these people must experience on a daily basis. By educating myself on the facts of this killer, I’ve been able to appreciate my life much more. But that’s not enough. We as a people must make a conscious effort to combat this. We must put an end to it. But how?

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The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.

- Alice Walker

**2007 Black History Month Events**


**Black to My Roots**: Fridays-Saturdays, 7:30 p.m.; Sundays, 3:30 p.m. through Feb. 24, Rainier Valley Cultural Center, 3515 S. Alaska St. Tickets: $9.50-$18.50; $9.50-$15.50; 206-325-6500 or www.ticketwindowonline.com.

**African American History Forum**: Saturdays, 1 p.m., Barnes & Noble, 600 Pine St. Learn about the impact African-Americans have had on the Pacific Northwest. Information: 206-264-0156.

**HARRIET TUBMAN, TRAVELING ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD**: Karol Brown combines humor, drama and audience interaction to chronicle Tubman’s experience as “conductor” of the network that helped slaves escape to safety in Canada or free areas of the United States during the 19th century. 600 Pine St. Fridays-Saturdays, 7:30 p.m.; Sundays, 3:30 p.m. through Feb. 23, Richmond Beach Library, 19601 21st Ave. N.W., Shoreline; 206-546-3522.

**The Right to Dream**: Living Voices performs a play that re-creates a young man’s coming of age as an African American in Mississippi during the 1950s and 1960s.

- Saturday, 2 p.m., Bainbridge Public Library, 1270 Madison Ave. N., Seattle; 206-842-4162
- Feb. 22, 7 p.m., New Holly Family Resource Building, Gathering Hall, 7054 32nd Ave. S.; 206-723-4073
- Feb. 23, 2:30 p.m., Richmond Beach Library, 19601 21st Ave. N.W., Shoreline; 206-546-3522

Check your local listings for other Black History Month events.