

Local youth named a Jim Casey Young Fellow

Maryana, a 20-year-old participant in the DHS Executive Office's Independent Living Initiative, was recently selected as a [Jim Casey Young Fellow](#), joining 11 other former foster youth from around the country for the fellowship's leadership and advocacy training.

"Being a fellow gives me a platform to advocate for what I have experienced in the system," said Maryana. "I really like that it will allow me to speak with other foster youth as well as local and national leaders about important issues. If those of us who have been through foster care get our voices out there, we can dispel myths and end stigma."

As a fellow, Maryana will engage in analysis and advocacy around personal areas of interest that include LGBTQ youth issues, permanence, postsecondary education, and adoption of older youth. Recently, Maryana had the opportunity to put her skills to use at the Young Fellows fall convening where she helped to facilitate a workshop that focused on limitations in progress and policy for LGBTQ youth of color in the child welfare system. She hopes that the fellowship will present her with more opportunities to participate in panels and workshops in the future.