

TESTIMONY OF FREDDIE BELTON
GRADUATE OF CFWD'S MEN'S SERVICES PROGRAM
OCTOBER 11, 2001

Good afternoon Senator Breaux and committee members. My name is Freddie Belton and I am a graduate of the Men's Services Program in Baltimore, Maryland. I am a father of five children – four boys and one girl. I am married and my wife and I have just celebrated our one-year anniversary.

Being married, working and buying a house I feel like a different person than the man who came to Men's Services in 1994. Before Men's Services I used drugs, was involved in crime, and wasn't on track to being the best father. But, with the help of Joe Jones and the program I was able to beat the odds. Part of the reason is they never gave up on me. Even after being incarcerated they stood by me, helped me get clean and find a job. Because of Men's Services I was able to overcome my addiction and recommit myself to my children. Now I see them regularly and I pay child support.

I didn't know that while my children's mother was on welfare they never saw the child support. It's hard knowing that the child support you paid never helped your kids at all. Sometimes after paying child support there is not a whole lot left over, but if I could bring home more money and pay less in taxes I could pay child support, spend more time with my children, less time working and give my family a little more. And live the American dream.

As a result of my former lifestyle I owe a large amount of money to child support, but with the help of Men's Services I'll be able to have some of the debt forgiven as long as I pay child support and take care of my children.

Right now I am working two jobs and looking for a GED program to improve my education and better support my family.

While I have it together I am not sure what my life would be like if it were not for Men's Services. There are not a lot of programs that help guys like me get on the right track. That's why it is important for you to make sure every city has a Men's Services. Because if programs like Men's Services aren't around to help a lot of kids will grow up with out fathers and end up in the same situation. I know. I grew up without my father. Thank you.