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Testimony for the 119K Commission

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. I am here to emphasize a crucial yet often overlooked group - youth who have children.

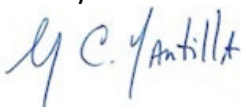
I want to share the story of my daughter. Like many young people, she dreamed of pursuing higher education and building a career. However, life took a different turn for her. After completing high school, my daughter had her first child, which forced her to put those dreams on hold. Today, she has two sons; her primary concern is working to feed and care for them. The pressure to provide for her children leaves her little time, energy, or financial resources to pursue further education or career development.

My daughter's story is not unique. Many young parents find themselves in a similar situation, balancing the enormous responsibilities of raising children while also trying to secure a stable future for themselves and their families. Unfortunately, the resources available to them are often inadequate.

This is why I urge the commission to advocate for more programs that specifically target youth who are parents. We need initiatives that allow young parents like my daughter to prepare for a meaningful career while earning enough to care for their children. This means providing affordable childcare, flexible scheduling for school and work, and education opportunities that don't require them to sacrifice their ability to provide for their families.

Without such support, we risk perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting the potential of young people who, given the right tools and opportunities, can contribute greatly to our communities and economy. Let's not forget these young parents—they need us, and more importantly, their children need us to invest in their futures.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Evelyn C. Mantilla". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".