

**Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness Resource Fair**  
**Comments by Leslie Garcia, Youth Action Board Member**  
**June 5, 2020**

My name is Leslie Garcia, and I live in Springfield, Massachusetts.

I am passionate about ending youth and young adult homelessness because I grew up watching my mom struggle with homelessness. When I became a young adult, I faced and continue to face the same obstacles that she and many others did. I have witnessed so much discrimination and unfair treatment towards people who are homeless as a whole, including youth and young adults.

I have been fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to advocate for many of my friends and peers, to take part in the work to end homelessness for youth and young adults.

I care about racial equity because my friends, my family, and my community are all people of color. How they are treated is important to me because everyone deserves to be treated fairly, no matter the color of their skin. At the end of the day, we all bleed. We all have souls. We all have feelings. WE ARE ALL HUMAN BEINGS.

To those of you who are elected officials, we want you to know that everyone isn't being treated fairly. There is a lot of discrimination and favoritism. Often, there is little or no help for us. There are long waiting lists. There is a limited amount of emergency shelter specifically for youth and young adults.

I am part of the Springfield Youth Action Board. We work with and advise the City and the homeless service providers about solutions to homelessness. Along with my friends and colleagues on the YAB, we talk about what it would take to end youth and young adult homelessness. Here's what we want you to know:

We want you to give us opportunities.

We want you to help guide us to accomplish our goals.

We want you not to deny us help or limit eligibility for programs.

We want everyone to be treated fairly.

We want schools and colleges to do more to identify young people who are homeless, reach out to them discreetly, and help them get the housing and support they need.

We want you to provide funding for the programs that are working.

We want you to listen to us, to hear our voice, and to work with us to end homelessness for every youth and young adult in the state.