



Rep. Tom Emmer on Emmer Recognizes Foster Care Month

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****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** Hi everyone, Tom here. May was Foster Care Month when we recognized the impact of youth, parents and advocates in the foster care system and worked together to address the shortcomings. My predecessor, as you know, was actively involved in this issue while she was in the office, having been a foster mother to 23 teenage girls. It's important work and although I don't have the same personal involvement in this issue as my predecessor, I appreciate the opportunity to get involved. Last week, Maria from California spent a day with me as part of the Foster Youth Shadow Day. In and out of the system most of her life, she turned to school work as her outlet. Now, she's a health and biology student at Brown University. Amazing success story. Next year, she's going to be teaching math to underserved elementary students. She shared her frustrations with the current system, particularly with how the youth aren't fully aware of all the resources available to them and the need for finding more quality foster parents who treat it like family, not a business. I'm so impressed by this young woman and so thankful she shared her story and time with me. Fortunately and unfortunately, she's one of the lucky ones. There are nearly 400,000 American children in the foster care system. One in four are eligible for adoption. After years of switching homes and schools, tens of thousands like Maria will simply age out of foster care without finding permanent homes or forever families. Many wind up homeless. These children are not delinquents. They've just been dealt a difficult hand and are in need of someone to look up to or rely on. I wish there was an obvious overarching solution to help foster youth. On the legislative level, we can make it easier for faith-based organizations to be advocates for child welfare and to help cut through the red tape when families want to adopt. More importantly, it takes local community members stepping up and if not fostering, at least getting involved in the lives of these young men and women. As Maria said, these are the future doctors and lawyers and inventors if they're just given the opportunity. No child should ever feel forgotten or unloved.

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