



Jefferson Alvarez's Story Youth Leader, UTEC



Good afternoon. My name is Jefferson Alvarez, and I'm 21 years old and live in Lawrence, Massachusetts. I'm from an organization named UTEC and I'm here on behalf of Teens Leading The Way (TLTW). I'm here to tell my story, so thank you all for listening to me. Before I begin, I want you all to know that there are many peers behind me that I work with from all around Massachusetts who have similar stories to mine, and it's an honor to speak on their behalf as well.

Seven years ago, freshman year of high school, I got into a fight. It was the middle of winter, it was cold out, and I saw another student looking at me funny. I approached the student and we exchanged words. Before a punch was thrown, school security guards pulled us apart and called the police. The police arrived, handcuffed me, and brought me outside to a police car. I felt like a criminal and like I had done something beyond terrible. The police ended up bringing me home, and I was then summoned to court. At court, the judge told me to stay away from the victim, and I was removed from the high school and put into an alternative school.

At my new school, I kept getting into fights and I kept getting arrested. One fight led to me getting charged with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon because I kicked another student with my shoe. Eventually I was expelled from school and committed to the Department of Youth Services (DYS) where I started meeting other young people just like me and hearing their stories.

I realized that I hadn't done anything nearly as wrong as some of the others, and it made me think about life. Being in DYS taught me how to respect others, a lesson I hadn't learned yet. After DYS, I started realizing that there were better ways to read and approach people, and that fighting people was not an appropriate way to get respect. Now, I feel like I get more respect for talking it out than fighting. This led me to UTEC where I now I work on the café crew – we make some awesome pork paninis – and my goal is to get my GED, push forward, and I'd like to begin paramedic training since I've work the last few years as a lifeguard in Lawrence through the DCR.

This expungement bill *[TLTW has focused their campaign on juvenile record expungement and is working to increase awareness of the issue and pass legislation for record expungement in Massachusetts]* will help me directly because I have many juvenile records that even if sealed, could hold me back from my life goals. I really want to work with kids, but what if I wanted to be a foster parent or what if I wanted to run a daycare? Sealing a record is helpful, but it's not enough. Because of one mistake in my life, I began a long path that pulled me from school and got me deeper into the streets, and I'm 21 now and still fighting for my GED. I'm 21 now, I'm not who I was when I was 16. But now I'm full of madd love!

I will soon be able to seal my record, which means if this bill passes, I could expunge my juvenile record by the time I'm 24. I'm here to ask you to help me get back to the future that I left off chasing seven years ago. Please pass bills S 944 and H 2309 favorably. It won't only help me, it could help thousands of young people who are stuck in the same situation as me ... Thank you.