

March 10, 2015

Co-Chair Shields, Co-Chair Williamson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is [REDACTED]. I am here today to speak to you about my experience with the attorney who represented me in my juvenile dependency case, Andrea Boucher. Before I tell you about my experience with Andrea, first I will tell you a little about myself.

I am a single dad to two adorable children, [REDACTED] (age 4) and [REDACTED] (age 6). I've been raising my kids on my own for the last 2.5 years. Besides being a busy dad, I work as a server in a local restaurant and am taking online classes at a Bible college. Eventually, I hope to become a pastor.

I have a long and complicated past. I was a drug dealer, drug user and involved in domestic violence. At that time, I lived with the kids and their mother. In November 2011, a neighbor called DHS about our children and the kids were removed and placed with their grandparents. I was arrested on drug charges and put in jail. When I was released from jail I realized I needed to change my behavior. I also knew I had a long road ahead of me. I had damaged all of the positive relationships in my life and needed to start over.

When I met my attorney for the first time, she spent over two hours with me, listening to my story. She told me that she believed in me and that she knew I could change. Together we developed a good plan to get my children back. Andrea told me to get involved in the programs I was offered and to work hard. I committed to attend drug and alcohol treatment, counseling, and parenting classes. Over time, I got myself together and my changes on the inside were reflected in my actions. About 9 months into the case, my caseworker, the other attorneys in the case, and even the judge started noticing a difference in my behavior. Andrea continued to fight hard for me and, even though I wasn't paying her, she stood up for me when no one else would.

In August 2012, [REDACTED] were returned to me and my DHS case was dismissed in February 2013. In 2014, I completed the terms of my probation. The kids are doing really well. I have sole custody of the kids, but their mom and I have a good relationship and work together to take care of them.

I am grateful to the people who believed in me and supported me through my journey. Andrea was a godsend to me and I am not sure my children would have been returned to me without her encouragement and advocacy. She was a big part of my support system and her advice was valuable to me.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]