

Hello,

My name is Jade and here is my story:

I was alienated from my father by my mother from birth until I was a few years old, and then again from the time I was 4/5 until I was an adult and found him myself.

My mother has never provided me with any reason as to why she chose to keep me from my father, nor do I expect that she ever will. It wasn't until I had known my father for a few years did I discover that he tried to make contact my entire life and also paid his child support obligations, I again had no knowledge of this growing up either.

My childhood and young adult life was deeply impacted by this tragedy of being kept from my father. I was a troubled youth and found myself in the court system at 16yrs old and continued down the path of being in trouble with the law until I ended up in prison at age 21. I had a sentence of 43 months, it was in that time that I reached out to the Grand Ronde news paper wrote a personal ad asking for any information on him. My half sister then found this article and passed it to my father, he reached out to me and eventually brought my step mom, and brother to meet me. This was a very healing time for me, I spent a countless amount of time in my youth and young adult life full of negative emotions, resentment, and even self guilt thinking that my father didn't want to have any type of relationship with me. However once I met him and began having a relationship with him I could feel these emotions and feelings lifting off of my shoulders.

I honestly believe that if I would have been allowed by my mother to have a relationship with my father my entire life I could have possibly not made some of the mindless choices that I made. I think that I made many of these mistakes because I was so full of emotions and I had no outlet nor did I have anyway to find him, once I got older I was afraid of rejection based upon sometimes my mother had said like "he doesn't want anything to do with you" "if he wanted you he would contact you". My father and I now have a great relationship and I have been able to speak my mind to my mother and I have had a great amount of time to heal from my past. I support equal parenting because I know if I would have had it my life would have been different.

My story as a father now—

Before I went to prison I was in a relationship with someone and we ended up conceiving a child, she was born shortly after I was incarcerated. Since the time my daughter was born I begged, pleaded, and begged some more to be an active and as equal parent as I could be from prison. I could not even get her mom to send me photos of our daughter. I ended up after the first month filing paperwork through the prison which was directed to the county in which she was living in to force her to send photos of my child once a month. I had to file enforcement of this order more than once because the mother would not follow the simple order. Fast forward from 2006 to 2010, I got out of prison and turned my life around, began building myself a solid foundation. I reached out to my daughters mother asking to meet our child her response was "she has a dad, she doesn't need you" "she doesn't even know who you are" I was heart broken, I gave up for a little while and in 2014 I had enough and decided to file visitation paperwork through the county courts, the first step was suppose to be our child was to be enrolled in counseling so that she could be exposed to the life changing news that

moms boyfriend was not her father and that I was. Mother again decided not to follow the rules. I filed contempt of court had her held in contempt and eventually in 2015 I was able to meet and begin having a relationship with our daughter. We have had a great time getting to know each other, mom has been resistant the entire time. In the beginning of 2018 I began getting involved in the School and the DR to see where I could aid my child. Upon mother finding out I was seeking information for such places she being angry and hostile. With held our child from me and begin trying her best to lessen me as a person to her by making terrible comments about me. My child is failing school, she is on an IEP of which mother has never attended an IEP meeting, I'm not her custodial parent so I can not make changes to the IEP, nor can I have them do any testing to figure out what her exact learning disability is because based on her IEP she has an "undiagnosed learning disability". Mother refuses to allow the school to do any testing at all. My child was diagnosed shortly after her mother told her that I was her father in 2015 with ADHD- Inattentive type and has since been on about 6 different medications for ADHD. She now has anxiety, depression, irritability, and anger issues; which are all side effects to all of the medications mother and Dr have had her on. I have tried to advocate for my daughter in the drs office but again since I am not her custodial parent I have no say what so ever! The battle and struggle is real and it is effecting my daughter and I. Especially her, an example is on Valentine's Day I sent her a small bouquet of flowers to school and she has yet to bring them back to her mothers house, they are at school on her desk, the only place she will be able to enjoy them without interference.

My daughters mother has had the ability to alienate her older child's father from her as well, she is 14 and only learned about her dad in 2017, she allowed communication for a little while only to remove all communication between the two of them again. The family on the fathers side is now also alienated after the child learned the truth, all the children of the family all believed they were nothing more than friends.

Equal parenting will help to stop situations like the one I have been in my entire life, it will help children have loving ever lasting relationships with both parents through childhood and not have to wait until they are adults to seek out their other parent.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

I support your bill!