

My name is Michael Nichols and I live in Multnomah County with my partner, Sally Brown. I wholeheartedly and passionately support this bill, 318.

I've just recently become a resident in Multnomah County for this very reason and this is my story. I had been living in CA working a 6AM-2:30PM project manager job in the oil industry seeing my daughter every day after work. Birth mother (BM), living in CA as well, and I had been separated for approx. 2 years. I told her about my partner, Sally Brown, and that triggered a movement on the birth mothers part to separate me from my daughter. Not a couple months after telling BM that I was dating someone she told me with a 1 week notice she was taking our daughter and moving to Hood River, Oregon to live with her parents. I immediately started legislation in CA and wound up with an agreement with BM that gave provisions for cross-state parenting. Much to my dismay, not a month later I was served with court paperwork as the BM decided the agreement we had was no longer working. One court order later and I was left with reduced parenting time.

Jump forward about 7 months I was finally able to get a job that allowed me to move to Oregon so I could be closer to my daughter. Unfortunately I did not have anyone to move in with and as such the only job I could get that could support my family is working in Alaska 3 weeks in a row then off for 3 weeks. Believe me, if there was any other opportunity for me to not be doing this job I would. Since my move BM has significantly decreased my parenting time, reducing the amount of facetime, and exerting control over how, when I get to see my daughter as well as cutting me off from our daughters' school and medical providers. I have been cut off more since my move then I was while I was living in CA.

The reality of the situation is that this bill isn't for the parents, it's for the children. I don't feel the need to cite every article, study, statistic, and report that show having equal access to both parents is in the best interest of the child. I believe any reasonable individual can critically think and come to that conclusion themselves. What we currently have is legislation that lends itself to the belief that there is a "better" parent, a more "capable" parent, a more "stable" parent. What Bill 318 gives, mostly fathers, is an equal opportunity to be the best parent they can be for their child without the prejudice that they are not the "better, more capable, more stable," parent. A child should not be punished by restricting access to a parent just because the parents relationship did not work.