

To the Judiciary Committee:

Dear Chair Bynum and members of the Judiciary Committee,

RE: HB 2959

I am a concerned grandparent writing to request the passing of HB 2959.

My grandson is an emerging adult who has been deemed a “court kid” for going on six years now. My husband was granted custody due to the parent’s issues with substance abuse, mental health issues, and violence. Logically the story would end there with a happy ending that the child is safe. However, the judge announced in the open courtroom that we were “well-to-do-grandparents”. Since then we have had 20 professionals clamoring to seek involvement in our case.

This includes:

- 7 reunification therapists
- 4 child therapists, the last one chosen by the court at the recommendation of another court family contractor who had not seen the child but for a short visit a couple years prior. The child has grieved the losses of prior therapists and still asks to see the last one who is a well qualified trauma psychologist. When abuse was disclosed by the child, the opposing side made demands for a new therapist.
- 1 case manager who we refused to have involved on our case, but she still sends us bills anyway and calls the abuse the child has disclosed “historical”.
- 3 different lawyers represented the child, all appointed by the court the 2nd lawyer resigned for ethical reasons, reasons that are unknown to us, the child’s current attorney last spoke with him in June of 2020 for 4 minutes and told him that he had to go see the new therapist and he did not have a say in the matter.
- 2 parenting supervisors
- 1 parenting coordinator

- There is a court order in the child's custody case stating he may not speak with anyone but the new therapist. We wanted to take the child with us to a family therapist to help work through his grief at losing yet the 3rd therapist and were told that would be breaking the court order. We have been told by a trauma therapist that this behavior by a court is called "squelching the victim" and violates the child's civil rights.
- The child has had 6 open CPS cases all "undetermined"
- 2 Light house forensic interviews about the abuse
- 1 CARES NW interview regarding abuse
- And 1 psychologist we later found out was not a psychologist who is the current reunification specialist. We have paid her \$ 2,000.00 and she has had a 45 minute session with us and has not met the child. So we have paid for her to see the child's father.
- The case began in Washington County almost 6 years ago, no one involved in the case with the exception of attorneys, and some other professionals involved have lived in this jurisdiction for over 4 years, yet the case has remained in Washington County.
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All of these were named in court orders and often chosen by others.

- We have been told who to see for therapy, who not to see (violation of right to choose own health care provider, Patient Bill of Rights).
- What kind of schooling he can get.
- Whether we can volunteer at the school or not. I was court ordered by the judge to no longer volunteer in my grandchild's classroom after doing so for over 4 months. Please note have had 10 years of appointed school board service on the NWRESD Board of directors, served as a County Commissioner All these decisions were made behind closed doors in the Judge's Chambers, we are going into our 6th year in family court and it continues after spending our retirement savings of \$300,000.00
- Therapist input is disregarded.

All records of abuse have been hushed from the court records even though we have repeatedly brought this to the attention of every court professional. My grandson's current attorney has only talked to him once for 4 minutes last year to tell him that he had no rights and there was nothing that would be done.

This kind of systematic racketing and control of the courts in kids lives has to end, especially for victims of abuse and for older children who would rather "vote with their feet" rather than be under the rule of a broken family court system.

In closing Family court destroys families, sometimes places children in harms way, and is a unregulated industry where crimes against children are ignored, as are their civil rights. I support this bill as it is a start in giving children a voice, the age should be younger than 14 however. Children who survive trauma should be heard, not a commodity for multiple “professionals” to financially gain, in the broken sometimes abusive family court system.

Sincerely,

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