

2021 3.10 Written Testimony for Sen Gelser SB707, SB749

As I prepared for this written testimony, I realized it was not Jessica's fault. It was not my fault. Rich Tamler, my former husband, and I were at a loss how to settle our daughter. We had tried psychiatry, medicines, private schools, divorce and none of it was the answer. And we tried home schooling, a private therapist, and TREX, a wilderness program.

We learned about TREX at our Jewish Temple. We listened to Gabriel Rivera talk about his program and heard from several parents who had children there. Jessica had started running away at night and going into Seattle at the age of 15 and staying in homeless shelters for teens. So, one morning Rich and I and Jessica's therapist picked her up at a shelter and drove her to TREX in Bend, Oregon.

We were desperate. We never suspected this was an unregulated program. We never asked the important questions about Gabriel Rivera or about his training or his staff. We were naïve.

We later learned they took the young teens into the desert that winter and gave them tents to live in. They isolated Jessica and did not allow anyone to speak to her for 30 days. They bullied her.

Four months later I went to get her because I just knew this program was wrong. Later I learned their methods were to tear children down and yet, I didn't hear how they built them up. Jessica is still suffering from the nightmare of that place. And we suffer with her.

This is why Rich and I are supporting the passage of SB707 and SB749. We are hoping we can help parents and children never suffer like our family has in an unregulated children's program like TREX.

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