

SA13-24

HB6685

House	10396-10401	6
Judiciary	3390, 3391-3414, (3417-3418), (3420), 3445-3450, 3462-3466, 3469-3473, 3480, 3481-3482, 3503, 3519-3523, 3526, 3532-3544, 3547-3551, 3553-3554, 3555-3557, 3561-3563, 3564-3568, 3617-3621, 3627-3635, 3638-3669, 3673, 3675, 3680-3691, 3693-3704, (3705-3716)	169
Senate	5382-5383, 5400-5401	4

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2013**

**VOL.56
PART 30
10111 – 10450**

Absent, not voting 8

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The bill passes, in concurrence with the Senate.

Are there any announcements or introductions?

Hearing none, will the Clerk please call Calendar
Number 515?

A VOICE:

He's going to need the first copy of those.

A VOICE:

Hold on, we're doing 515 first.

A VOICE:

Oh.

THE CLERK:

Calendar Number 515, on Page 16, Favorable Report
of the joint standing Committee on Judiciary,
Substitute House Bill 6685, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK
FORCE TO STUDY LEGAL DISPUTES INVOLVING CARE AND
CUSTODY OF MINOR CHILDREN.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Representative Fox, you have the floor, sir.

REP. G. FOX (146th):

All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move for the acceptance of the joint
committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The question is acceptance of the joint committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

Representative Fox, you have the floor.

REP. G. FOX (146th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the title states, this bill would establish a task force to study issues involving child custody. It also would address issues regarding the work and the use of guardian ad litem in family cases.

Mr. Speaker, the Clerk has an amendment, LCO Number 8725. I would ask that that be called and I be given leave to summarize.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Will the Clerk please call LCO 8725, which will be designated as House Amendment "A."

THE CLERK:

House Amendment "A," LCO 8725, introduced by Representative Fox, et al.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The Representative seeks leave of the Chamber to summarize the amendment.

Is there objection to summarization? Is there objection?

Hearing none, Representative Fox, you may proceed with summarization.

REP. G. FOX (146th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What this does is after some deliberations and discussions with the introducer of this bill, Senator Fasano, as well as Representative Gonzalez, we have configured the task force a little differently than the -- the file copy. What the, but what the task force will do is they'll look at the role of guardian ad litem. They'll look at shared-custody issues and how that relates to best-interest-of-childrens issues, which is a standard that Court's utilize when making their determinations.

It also will look at the costs involved with the actions involving child-custody disputes, and the task force will be, will likely make recommendations to the Legislature, which we will study next session.

And I would move adoption of the amendment.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The question before the Chamber is adoption of House Amendment Schedule "A."

Will you remark further on the amendment? Will you remark further?

Representative Rebimbas, of the 70th District;
ma'am, you have the floor.

REP. REBIMBAS (70th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I do rise in support of the amendment that eventually will become the underlying bill.

I think the task force, I mean, we throw the word task force around often, but this is concerning the custody of children in a very, you know, high-intensity matter, such as divorce or legal separations, things of that nature. So it certainly would be in everyone's best interest to review the procedures and policies we currently have in place, see what's working, what's not, and then hopefully improve upon them.

So I do rise in support of the amendment that's before us and the underlying bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Thank you, Representative.

Will you remark further on the amendment? Will you further?

If not, I will try your minds. All those in favor, simply signify by saying condition Aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Opposed, Nay.

The Ayes have it. The amendment passes.

Will you remark further on the bill as amended?

Will you remark further on the bill as amended?

If not, will staff and guests please come to the Well of the House. Will the members please take your seats? The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll.

The House of Representatives is voting by roll. Will members please report to the Chamber immediately.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Have all members voted? Have all members voted?

If all members, will the members please check the board to determine if their vote is properly cast?

If all members have voted, the machine will be locked. And the Clerk will take a tally.

THE CLERK:

One-forty-three, zero, seven.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Will the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Substitute House Bill 6685, as amended by House
"A."

Total Number Voting	143
Necessary for Passage	72
Yea	143
Nay	0
Not voting	7

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The bill passes.

Representative Morin, of the 28th District.

REP. MORIN (28th):

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Good afternoon.

REP. MORIN (28th):

Mr. Speaker, I move for immediate transmittal of
House Bill 6685 to the Senate.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Well, is there objection? Is there objection?

Without objection, so ordered.

A VOICE:

Is that the only thing you want to move to the
Senate (inaudible) the other ones? You're not going

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STANDING
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HEARINGS**

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PART 10
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announcement just for safety purposes and it says that I'd ask you to note the location of, and access to, the exits in this hearing room. The two doors through which you entered the room are the emergency exits and are marked with exit signs. In the event of an emergency please walk quickly to the nearest exit, after exiting the room proceed to the main stairs or follow the exit signs to one of the fire stairs. Please quickly exit the building and follow any instructions from the Capitol Police. Do not delay and do not return unless and until you are advised that it is safe to do so. In the event of a lockdown announcement, please remain in the hearing room and stay away from the exit doors until an all-clear announcement is heard.

It is our procedure to devote the first hour of testimony to public officials. We, then, will turn to members of the public. If we have not go through the public officials list in the first hour, we will alternate with members of the public and the public officials until we conclude that first list. Also, please limit your testimony to three minutes. You will hear a bell that goes off and, of course, questions can extend the time but if you could limit your initial marks to three minutes. We'd ask you to -- when you hear the bell, to summarize your comments at that time. So, with that, I will start with our public officials list and the first name that we have is State Senator Len Fasano.

And good morning, Senator Fasano.

SENATOR FASANO: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,
members of the committee. I thank you very
much.

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There is two bills I am going to talk about, one extraordinarily briefly because this committee had passed this bill before. That's as committee Bill 178, and, essentially, what that bill said is if a parent has been terminated because of abuse of a child, they should be continued to obligated to pay child support. Abigail Tru, who brought this to my attention, is here and she will be talking more about this. This committee has passed this twice out of committee and, twice, it's gotten through one house and then it died on the calendar last year. So I think that it is a worthwhile bill, so I just wanted to bring that to your attention and support it.

And the next one is Raised Bill 6685, the presumption of shared custody in disputes involving care and custody of minor children. I have also submitted the State of Arizona, who recently passed a bill regarding shared custody, has sort of a reference guide to a state that has recognized this. And what this deals with primarily is parent alienation.

Parent alienation is a real factor. And what happens in the Connecticut, as in most other states, is we do have joined custody but we have physical custody with one parent that sometimes, either consciously or subconsciously, the parent has got the physical custody of the child, sort of, promotes an anti-feeling towards the noncustodial parent and that has caused the noncustodial parent to be alienated from the lives of the children and it accelerates over time.

Now this is a big issue. Arizona law deal with it in such a manner to say that if it's recognized, the court system calls folks in, corrects the problem, and there are certain

ways of intervening on the issue. We don't have that in Connecticut so we are looking to, sort of, model it after this.

Let me just give you a bigger picture, if I may. I had a conversation yesterday with Judge Monroe. I've known Judge Monroe for years and she is the family court administrator. And Judge Monroe and I go back from when I was practicing in New Haven. And we talked about family courts and, in particular, three components: parent alienation; guardian ad litem, DALs; and AMC, attorney for the minor child. And when we talked about it, I think what this committee has to understand is the impact of the bills that we passed well intentioned had an impact that I don't think this body wants to have.

Let me explain. A GAL is appointed by lawyers -- my profession is going to get a little mad at me, that's all right -- GALs are appointed by lawyers who get together and decide to point a particular GAL. Now family law is a close nucleus of lawyers. Those of us who practice, if you practice family you do very little outside of family law, and if you don't practice family you don't venture into that world. It is a unique unto itself. So when lawyers kind of get together and pick a GAL, they all know each other. When the GAL is appointed, these fees that the GAL charges are anywhere between 250 and 335 dollars an hour for an appointed person by the court. That is a huge fee.

A lot of people want to be GALs. In fact, when they had classes -- and I applaud Governor -- sorry -- I applaud Judge Monroe for having classes to teach the role of a GAL -- she had a thousand people showing up to her class. She

was surprised. I'm not. I'm not surprised because when you appointed a GAL, there is not oversight, there is no one checking your work. You work for the kids, and if you say it's in the best interest of your kids -- of the kids. That's all your obligation is. So these bills have gotten out of hand.

You'll hear stories today of GAL who have hit bills 8, 9,000 dollars a month, a month. And here is the problem. The lawyers who appointed the GAL, know the GAL, so if me and Chairman Fox were litigants in family court matters and we're in Family Court, we see each other all the time, it would not be out of the questions for me to say, Hey, you know what, if you have a case, I'd love to be your GAL, and for him to say that to me.

Now, if my client is upset at Chairman Fox because he is charging too much, one may argue that I may not be as tough as if I didn't know the person. I would suggest the GAL should not practicing substantial amount of their cases in the court for which they are a GAL; otherwise, the hint of impropriety, which is all across our Practice Books, must be raised.

Some may argue, well, Len, GALs are very talented and they should be paid that amount of money. You pay your lawyer that amount of money. I would say that right, but I have a right to fire my lawyer. If I don't think my lawyer who's charging my \$335 is doing a right job, I say I'll fire you. I want somebody else. If they are not giving me the back up or I don't think they are doing right, I can get rid of them. That's not true at the GAL. You have to go to the court and ask. It's a difficult task. Now, if I'm denied, I would suggest that GAL probably is not going to be so

friendly to me thereafter because I have been attacking the integrity of that GAL. So it's a system that really is out of whack.

I brought this up to Judge Monroe. And what I suggested was that I would produce JFS language with the permission of this body to have a task force -- and I know that word doesn't mean a lot in this building from time to time -- have a task force where Judge Monroe would be the chairman on the task force. And I would purpose JFS language that in this task force we would have folks who served the GALs, AMCs, folks from the bar and the public who don't really have an axe to grind as much as a problem to solve. They would be put on this committee to understand.

There is an orthopedic doctor who makes a good living. He had to pay for his lawyer, his wife's lawyer 50 percent, the GAL, the AMC, and the psychiatrist. After four years, he declared bankruptcy because he was paying \$20,000 a month for these bills. And mind this, if you don't pay the bill to a court-appointed person, you suffer sanctions that include being put in incarceration. That is what you are up against.

Cases are settled based upon the threat of bills coming and more coming. That's wrong policy, not for a family. We should have cases that are settled based upon agreements between the spouses and ex-spouses, not based upon my ability to pay. That was not the intent of this body when we passed these laws. I know that was not the intent of this body. But it has gotten out of control because there is no oversight. So I would suggest that, with your permission, that we put folks who are dealing with the system to make recommendations to all

of you for a system that, perhaps, can be more fair, more well respected because you are going to hear angry voices today. And they are not doing it because they think they have been hurt in their case as much as they are doing it because their case is over and they don't want it to happen to others. So that is my testimony for today, Chairman Fox. I appreciate you and members of the committee for listening.

REP. G. FOX: Well, thank you, Senator.

Are there questions for Senator Fasano?

Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator, thank you for that information. I can agree with you because I heard -- I have last year, a couple of mothers that came to my office and they have that concern. Some of the mothers they went broke and not having the opportunity to see their kids because they didn't have the money to pay, which is -- I think that's terrible.

Now my question for you is why, then, Judge Monroe? Why do you want her to be the chair of that task force when, in my opinion, she was one of those GALs you were saying before? And I heard complaints about that -- mothers that came to me saying, you know, I'm having this problem, me talking to her, she don't want to understand, she is not helping us. And they end up -- this lady went flat broke. So can we maybe look for another person to be chair of the task force?

SENATOR FASANO: Representative Gonzalez, I think that is a great question. The reason why I thought of Judge Monroe is because for the plan to work you have to have buy-in, to have buy-in, you have got to have the person who is in charge of the program be assured that the changes they're going to endorse and follow through. I have, also, had a great relationship with Judge Monroe. She has changed the GAL system since she had been there. Before, there were no classes. There was no education system you had to go through - - if you wanted to be in GAL, you put your name on a list and you would just get picked. So she recognized the problems, and I want to recognize that she understands it.

After my hour long conversation with her yesterday -- we missed each other for a couple weeks. But after my hour long conversation with her yesterday, I honestly think that she believes reform needs to take place. And I honestly think that she gets the problem.

It was a particular case of some notoriety that really has brought this matter to the forefront. And she was well aware of that case, and I was impressed by that, and she was very well aware of some other issues. And I think that having her as a chair, she brings more issues to the table. But, you know, is that like the be-all and end-all for me? No, I want I want a task force and whatever I have to do to get it, I'm there so -- but that would be the reason why.

REP. GONZALEZ: So you said that you will work to create a task force that she will be in charge and to have more members of that task force and, in your opinion, who will appoint those members for that task force?

SENATOR FASANO: Correct.

REP. GONZALEZ: Who will appoint?

SENATOR FASANO: I would have the chairs, ranks, and then, usually, we have the governor, and so forth, and all the way down the typical appointments that are in our bills. But I would specify where they have to come from I think it the critical part. You know, members of the family bar would be a few people, general public who have had divorce issues who want to bring some issues to light -- those types of things so I apologize for not having it written out but Judge Monroe sort of -- and I came to this conclusion yesterday and wanted to share it with the committee. So I didn't have time between yesterday and today to put it together. But it would be the typical appointments that you would see that we do in the building.

REP. GONZALEZ: That's interesting, and I would like to be in one way or another be involved based on that.

SENATOR FASANO: I would be happy to send you a draft and work with you on any suggestions that you have.

REP. GONZALEZ: Based on, you know, a lot of complaints that I have heard in the past came from the Latino community. And I think that, - you know, some of them are being ignored when they complain about the GAL. And I would like to see if it is possible. I would like to get involved.

SENATOR FASANO: Thank you, Representative.

REP. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

REP. G. FOX: Representative Baram.

REP. BARAM: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Senator.

I'm just wondering with my knowledge of the GAL. The court normally appoints a party whether it's an attorney or somebody else to act in that position and, as you have pointed out now, training is required for these individuals. So I am just curious why you feel that there is no accountability if, in fact, it's the court that is appointing, you know, supposedly a neutral. The court has to approve the legal fees of that individual so if the fees are excessive, you would hope the court who exercise its discretion in deciding whether the fees were fair. And in most instances that I'm aware of, a GAL is appointed primarily when there are issues of custody or visitation, which can be very contentious and serious involving the best interest of the child. So I'm just wondering, you know, why your perception is more negative given the controls that are in place.

And I would just add, I certainly am aware that these fees can get to be, you know, huge sums. But those tend to be the more difficult contentious cases, and I would hope more of the exception than the rule. I am just curious what it is that you see that is undermining the accountability that I think may already exist in the court system.

SENATOR FASANO: Thank you, Representative, for the question.

First, I always thought the court appointed GALs. Judge Monroe, herself, told me yesterday that 90 to 95 percent of the GALs are appointed by the lawyers agreeing to the GAL. So it's not court appointed. In fact, one of the changes that we briefly talked about was whether the court should have jurisdiction to appoint the GAL. I would still suggest to you that -- I don't have a solution to that -- whether it should be the judge. I don't think it should be the lawyers. But let me start again and say that the judge does not appoint. It's the lawyers who agree among themselves, tell the judge, and then the judge makes the official appoint from the bench to start the process. But it's the lawyers. And that's where the problem begins.

When you say you get to review a bill, that's part of our problem. Because if I appoint you as a GAL because I like you, I know you from the courthouse and we work well together. And tomorrow you may be on the other side of the case from me or you're mad at me because I'm tore you apart on your attorney fees that may hurt me and my ability with my client dealing with your case. You know, it's that type of perception, at the very least, that causes the problems for those people who are subject to the GAL fess.

You may hear stories today on how GAL fees did not match the work that was done, for instance, phone messages. I talked to Attorney So-and-so being my counsel in a case, but my counsel doesn't have a corresponding phone call that they talk to that GAL. And when those issues are raised, there is nobody there fighting -- I would argue -- for the client. Because the system is -- forgive me for saying this, I'll get a lot of calls I'm sure from my fellow

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members -- is an inbred system. And there is no outside review of an inbred system, and that's the problem.

I'm saying whether that is accurate or not, I would argue it is perceived, and that's enough for me to say that we need to look at it and figure out. People are in front of our court system on the most delicate issue being family, at the very least, have to walk away saying that the system was not built in a manner that is not conducive to the problem that they have. And they leave with hard feelings and think we failed them. And when I put out there that I wanted to hear some folks who were upset with it -- I had it in North Haven, a get-together -- there had to be over 100, 150 people that showed up, all similar problems dealing with GALs.

These were not just the judge made a bad decision and I didn't get my kids. This was, you know, I couldn't afford to continue on with the case, and when I argued over the fee I was just told I had to pay. So if we have that problem, at the very least, let's look at it. And the task force can grab that information and find out if those high fees are just generated by those cases that are contentious. What's the average GAL fee?

I think \$330 for a GAL fee is absurd. I think it is extraordinarily high. It's not private counseling. Someone appointed by the court, I find that extraordinarily high. That's my view. I may be wrong, but that's in New Haven, not many lawyers in New Haven get \$335 an hour. So that would be where I would say lawyers are appointing; we need to change that. We need to look at the system, and it doesn't hurt to look.

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REP. BARAM: Thank you. I would -- I'm not against a task force study, and I always think that good things can come out of that. I would just say that with regards to the lawyers who are appointed GALs that lawyers are always interacting with one another and they are on different sides of the case. It's not unusual for a lawyer to have a couple of cases with other lawyers where they are on one side in one case and on the other side in other case. And you would hope or think that their ethical obligations would not cause them to, in any way, prejudice or retaliate against somebody else just because on one case they are having a difficult time. So, again, I am always open to studies. I just think that for most of the lawyers I think they do comply with their ethical obligations and canons and that they understand that different cases require different dynamics.

SENATOR FASANO: And please, I'm not casting dispersions of that nature, but I am saying the perception is out there that there is an issue that that close relationship may have an impact. And if GALs are from different jurisdictions, you have gotten rid of that perception at the very least. And the difficulty is a client can't say I want to remove the GAL like he can say I want to get rid of my counsel.

But I appreciate it and thank you so much for your questions.

REP. G. FOX: Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH: Morning, Mr. Chairman, and thank you.

And good morning, Senator.

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SENATOR FASANO: Morning. Are we in P&D right now?
No.

REP. SMITH: Hopefully not because we are both
missing if we are.

I am one of those lawyers who -- I'm on the
outside. You're right. It's, kind of, you
either do it or you don't. And I learned a
long time ago that it wasn't for me. So it's
not my area, certainly, of expertise. But just
to be sure that I am looking at the same the
bill because I heard your testimony and I'm
trying to see how it fits in. Is it 6685 that
we are talking about?

SENATOR FASANO: Yes, sir.

REP. SMITH: Okay. And with the Bill 6685, are you
looking to make this bill a study, the changes
to this bill, or are you looking to have the
changes that are proposed changed and also do a
study?

SENATOR FASANO: No. I would propose after having
the conversations with Judge Monroe last night.
I would propose JFS language to take this, with
the permission of the Chairs and Ranks, take
this and do substitute language to make it the
task force study with Judge Monroe helping out
in that task force. So that would be my
proposal. And in all candor, I think that the
chances of this bill getting through the
legislature this year are slim for a variety of
reasons. Whenever you have a new issue that
seems to be changing nature, then it has very
little success in this building until it
catches on. But I think doing a task force
that has the imprimatur of the experts saying
we need to do something, it's important.

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I know that this body, last year, had that alimony issue that I think got out of committee. And I think that that is sort of like what this bill, sort of saying, we need to take a look at this family court in many ways.

REP. SMITH: And I assume then if it does get out for a study that the new section that talks about sanctions and, perhaps, some criminal related charges would be part of the study, as well, to see if we want to go there and whether -- even if we to go there. Because I suspect if you're misrepresenting information or testimony to a judge, it is probably already an offense, you know, perjury, things of that nature.

So I am not sure whether we need that so I hope we take a look at that, as well.

SENATOR FASANO: That is Law Tribune article about someone not paying their fees, and they ended up being incarcerated for failure to pay the fee. It became a big article in the Law Tribune. I can't remember the edition, and I forgot to take it with me from my office in New Haven so it does happen. And I would like to take a look at that, too.

REP. SMITH: And just in terms of the fees themselves, I know we do in other parts of the law, for instance, in foreclosure matters and probate matters, attorneys are routinely appointed or even handle cases on a committee sales appointed by the court where their fees are limited by the court in terms -- they can only charge X number of dollars, whatever it may be. And it's a much lower rate than the standard rate that attorneys may otherwise charge. So that is something we may also want

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to consider so there is not such a range and disparage -- discrepancy in terms of what one lawyer or GAL may charge versus another.

And I agree with your suggestion, going outside of the district, perhaps, could be helpful because you probably do have some of that -- even though we all have our ethical obligations, certainly, it's more difficult sometimes to go after somebody and the fees they charged when you might be using that person again in another case. So I appreciate your testimony, but I think those are a couple things we can probably help out with.

SENATOR FASANO: I thank you for that. And I don't think anything is prohibited that if you are by GAL in one case and you and I have a case against, you know, you're representing your client and you have a case going on there and you're a GAL there. There is nothing that prohibits that, and I think that has other issues if you are trying to settle this case but you are arguing that your fees are too high over there. It's just human nature. Thank you very much.

REP. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. G. FOX: Representative Albis --

Representative Gonzalez, may I just go through the people that haven't yet gone?

REP. GONZALEZ: That's okay.

REP. G. FOX: Representative Albis, Representative O'Neill, then --

REP. ALBIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Good morning, Senator Fasano, good to see you.

SENATOR FASANO: Good morning.

REP. ALBIS: And thank you for discussing these important issues with us.

At the beginning of your testimony, you mentioned an Arizona law. I haven't had a chance to look it over, but I'm just wondering does that deal with some of the issues that you've been talking about thus far.

SENATOR FASANO: On the parent alienation side, more than on the GAL side.

REP. ALBIS: Okay. And what exactly does that law do?

SENATOR FASANO: Say it one more time?

REP. ALBIS: What does that law do in terms of parental alienation?

SENATOR FASANO: It starts a program that says that there's -- which we kind of have in Connecticut but it's not spelled out as well -- that -- and I've given a copy, I think, to all of our members -- but what it does is it allows the court to intercede early when it sees a parent alienation red flags going off and intercede and be proactive in that.

And one of the things that Judge Monroe and I talked about is that interceding in parental alienation, when you start to see those little red flags is more important than waiting for it to come at the end.

So this bill, sort of, spells out more how you find it and what do you do to look at it and

how shared responsibility goes through and is more defined in this Arizona law, getting rid of a lot of grey areas that we currently have in our Connecticut Law.

REP. ALBIS: And do you know how it defines parental alienation?

SENATOR FASANO: I don't remember.

REP. ALBIS: And is this a law that has already been signed into law or is it a pending bill?

SENATOR FASANO: I believe it's already been signed into law.

REP. ALBIS: Okay. All right. Well, thank you very much for your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR FASANO: Thank you, Representative Albis.

REP. G. FOX: Representative O'Neill.

REP. O'NEILL: I'm sorry I came in as you were testifying so I missed the first part.

In looking at, I guess, it's 6685, I think that's the number of the bill, I don't see anything in there about guardian ad litem. I heard you talking, pretty much, was all about that. Is your idea something to just use this as a vehicle, or is that bill supposed to be -- the contents of it supposed to be the subject matter of this task force and, in addition to that, this guardian ad litem issue? I'm a little confused.

SENATOR FASANO: Sure, and understandably so. We started off -- I started off when I submitted

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the bill way back of parent alienation. As I got into the parent alienation issue, the GAL issue started to shine as an issue that, sort of, dovetails into parent alienation. So --

REP. O'NEILL: Well, I guess my question is -- my question, though, is, is the parent alienation supposed to be a part of the task force study?

SENATOR FASANO: Both, the parent alienation and GAL to be a JFS if the committee was so inclined to get rid of this bill, substitute it with the task force bill to look at the parent alienation and GAL issues.

REP. O'NEILL: Okay, so not just GAL but the parent alienation stuff, as well.

SENATOR FASANO: Correct.

REP. O'NEILL: And maybe I shouldn't be saying this but, I guess, a question that I have is that we -- I think you're right. Task Forces are not generally encouraged around here these days that much anymore. And potentially a vehicle for this -- and I'm going to mention it though even though maybe I shouldn't -- is the Law Revision Commission which does studies of issues like this frequently involving judges and other interested parties. Now, it's not like Program Review and Investigation that goes out and gathers lots of field research, kind of, stuff but rather just has experienced people in the field sit down at the same table to try to work something out.

Would you think this, what you're aiming at, is this more where they have to do an in-depth research to gather information or is this something that it's just a matter of trying to work out language and some, sort of, mutual

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understanding of what needs to be changed or done?

SENATOR FASANO: I'm not familiar with the document or the organization you're talking about. I apologize for that, but I don't know that so I can't answer that question, except to answer it this way. I think -- before you came in, what I was saying is that the Family Court system that we set up through the Legislature and all of the different experts and GALs, AMCs, and so forth, are all good intentions. But what's happening is there's very little oversight and these fees are becoming to a point that litigants are saying I can't afford this divorce, I don't care what happens, I just can't go forward anymore, I'm losing my house, I'm losing my business, I just can't do it. That's bad public policy in my view.

And what I'm suggesting is we need to get people who are subject to the bills who are sitting in Family Court to be part of this task force to say, Yes, when I'm paying 10,000 to 12,000 dollars a month for lawyers, GALs, AMCs, psychologists, psychiatrists and out-of-pocket expenditures for all of these people, the system doesn't work.

REP. O'NEILL: Okay. So I guess what I'm getting at so the idea would be that there would be some, sort of, information gathering from all of the litigants? I mean they would have a seat at the table, as well?

SENATOR FASANO: Litigants who are subject to this, the way I had proposed it -- and Representative Gonzalez had some issues with it -- but Judge Monroe, head of the Family Court system, who I talked to last night -- felt that a task force where it consisted of her and another Family

Court judge, lawyers in the field of family law, some folks who felt that the system needed to be changed and the public were subject to the system -- not with an axe to grind but a problem to solve -- and whatever, some other people, would be the task force made up. So it's lawyers, judges, and litigants who come in and, sort of, say here are the issues, here are the problems. GALs would be at the tables. AMCs would be at the tables so that everybody can talk about what it is that they're trying to solve and how we can corral this.

REP. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. G. FOX: Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the second time.

Senator, like you had said before that it does happen. The parents get incarcerated because they can't, you know, afford to pay but one of the other problems that -- and I would like to know how we can work this out, maybe I don't know if you know about this -- but one of the problems that these parents might have and, especially females, was that they couldn't go back to court and complain about the problems they were having with the GAL because they have a gag order. Ladies can't complain period and they were going through hell trying to pay because they couldn't pay, they were not able to see that kid.

Now, the biggest problem was going to court and complain about it because it was the gag order, that was one. And the other problem was that the guardian ad litem -- I think that the GAL and also the court -- they would appoint an agency that will do supervise visits and also

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that they were ripping off these people and they couldn't do anything because there was a gag order and they were not able to complain.

That's why I'm looking around and I met with a group of ten females, and I don't see none of them here because it was a gag order and they violated it. They complained about the GAL or they complained about the agencies. There were always supervised visits. They were violating some conditions, and they will put them in jail and some of these females, they were.

They did complain and they were put in jail. So I think that more than that, I think that with this bill that we can address the GAL and also the agencies that were doing supervised visits. They were charging a lot of money, and this parent they couldn't complain.

SENATOR FASANO: I agree.

REP. GONZALEZ: Okay, thanks.

REP. G. FOX: Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL: Yes, Senator Fasano. I just wanted to thank you for coming and testifying this morning. I was listening in my office and as soon as I realized whose voice it was that was speaking I ran in here. But I think that what you've stated has raised a lot of issues for myself and the other leaders on the committee. I'd like to work very closely with you to try to refine the proposal as far as a task force.

I'm familiar with the Law Revision Commission, but it seems to me that if we want some laypeople to be involved, perhaps, a standalone and so we'll just get the appointments lined up, and we have a JF deadline that's the 19th

so we're going to have to just jump on this and get it done by then. But thank you for coming and testifying. From my perspective alone, I'll do whatever I can to help make sure this gets out of this committee.

SENATOR FASANO: Thank you, Senator Kissel.

REP. G. FOX: And thank you, Senator Fasano.

I just have one question, would you envision this task force also including a discussion regarding the responsibilities of GALs and attorneys for the minor children? And also I've seen situations where what's allowed in court, with respect to testimony, can differ from judge to judge in terms of how much they rely upon the GALs and the AMCs so I think that might be something also to have. If you get this group together and this is their expertise it might be something they might want to look at, as well.

SENATOR FASANO: And what's interesting, too, on that notion is that defenses of parent alienation, when raised, have had mixed reviews with various judges. Some judges allow that evidence in the divorce case so you can demonstrate that one parent has alienated the kids. And some judges say we don't recognize that in the State of Connecticut. So even that part alone should be determined what is going to be the policy and what are the judges going to do.

It's unfair if New Haven says okay and Meriden says no. There actually was issue where one judge said, yes, and then a week later said I reverse my ruling. I don't know why. I've never really seen that happen but it happened.

So I think those are the types of things that we -- that parent alienation, this task force, needs to look at. We're not the only state. New York is looking at it. California is looking at it. As we saw, Arizona is dealing with the issue because it is a very real issue and, you know, you can probably hear from some folks who say when I started this case my daughter was 6. When the case finished, my daughter is 14-years-old, 15-years-old. You can hear cases where lawyers have said, Look, by the time this case is over, she's going to be or he's going to be 18, don't spend the money on me, let it go, and when they're 18, they'll come back.

I don't think that's right policy, in my view. That's the reason why I think all that needs to be looked at.

REP. G. FOX: Yes. And I think, in addition to how they're selected and how they're appointed, and I know that steps have been taken. You referenced those by Judge Monroe and having the training. And I don't think you need to be a GAL without that training now so I think there is an effort, but if you get this group together they may as well talk about some of the other issues that fall into this.

SENATOR FASANO: I agree.

REP. G. FOX: Okay. Well, thank you very much for your testimony this morning.

SENATOR FASANO: And I thank all of you guys. Thank you. Have a good day.

REP. G. FOX: Sorry, Chairman Coleman. I'm sorry. I didn't realize you had a question.

SENATOR COLEMAN: I did want to make a comment. I don't do much family law. The one, sort of, notorious case that I have handled in Family Court started in 2005, it continues. There's a hearing actually scheduled next week. So that's going on for, what's the arithmetic, eight years. Thank you.

SENATOR FASANO: Wow.

SENATOR COLEMAN: And every single issue that you've mentioned in your testimony is one that I've encountered in this particular case, including fees, regarding jail. And I think the courts overreliance on the view of the GAL in the case. So I'm very receptive to what you're talking about and also wanted to thank you for coming in and making this presentation to the committee.

SENATOR FASANO: Thank you, Senator Coleman.

SENATOR COLEMAN: You're welcome.

REP. G. FOX: And, actually, Representative Rebimbas also has a question.

REP. REBIMBAS: Good morning, Senator Fasano. Just, again, I wanted to say thank you for bringing this to our attention. I actually do a significant amount of family work so this is a certainly a subject matter that I have a strong interest in.

The only thing, as we move forward, which certainly, even informally, we've kind of discussed the task force is sounding like a pretty good idea. For those specific cases and specific people you have spoken to, if at all, if you can encourage them to obtain copies of the transcripts so then that can be something

we can work off of because I know many times, certainly, it could rightfully that it's occurred other times it could be certain decisions so we can kind of weed out. And it could also be a judge, an issue with a judge, how a judge may be improperly or not properly allowing testimony. So I'd be interested, also, in knowing the transcripts because if it's something we can identify. If it is a guardian ad litem issue or an AMC issue, then it certainly should be addressed. If it's a judge issue, it certainly should be addressed as well.

SENATOR FASANO: Thank you, Representative Rebimbas.

If I could just say this, there are people here who are coming to testify, who have cases. They're behind me, a number of them. I have asked them to do two things: One, don't use judges' names, I've asked them; I've asked them don't talk individually about your case because I don't want, to this body, to be perceived as they're coming here to cry about what happened to them individually. I want them to talk about the system and how they feel the system either helped them or failed them. But please feel free to ask them for the transcripts -- most of them are here -- but to understand how the system has failed them. I don't them if they talk about their individual case, they'll get too emotional and they'll get into the trees and lose sight of the forest, and I don't want them to turn you guys off, to be candid, so I've asked them for that, but please feel free to ask them questions.

REP. REBIMBAS: Thank you.

SENATOR FASANO: Thank you.

any legislative issues that might have to be added to that I would hate to lose a year because we just hold this particular bill. So I want to thank the committee itself because what they're doing does make a lot of sense. In the meantime, we do have people, like the woman in Manchester that are victims that will unfortunately lose their opportunity to convict somebody clearly when evidence shows a rape. And so I would ask that we pass this bill, pass this bill to keep it as a whole in case CONNSACS can't get everything together that needs to be done.

REP. G. FOX: Thank you, Senator.

Questions?

Seeing none, thank you very much.

SENATOR CASSANO: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

REP. G. FOX: Next is Teresa Younger.

Good morning.

TERESA YOUNGER: Good morning. Good morning, Senator Coleman, Senator Kissel, Representative Fox and Representative Rebimbas. You have my written testimony in front of you on a number of bills that I'll be talking about today, and I'd like to point out that there are experts in these fields coming up to testify on any questions that I am unable to answer, which I'm sure there will be many since, as most of you know, I am not an attorney.

HB 5666 HB 6636

SB 115

HB 6688

(HB 6685)

My name is Teresa Younger, and I am the executive director of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. We work on women's

public health, safety, economic security and the elimination of gender discrimination. Today, we are testifying with regards to three bills that are on your docket. House Bill 5666 will be the first one I'd like to comment on, AN ACT CONCERNING THE FORFEITURE OF MONEYS AND PROPERTY RELATED TO THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

Since 2004, the PCSW has convened the Trafficking and Person's Council to study the issue of human trafficking and make recommendations to the state Legislature. The Council has made recommendations that has resulted in the establishment of criminal penalties and civil remedies, victim-friendly curriculum for training the providers, state agencies and law enforcement, and providing for housing and public awareness and education and funding in those areas.

House Bill 5666 would actually build on and fill a loophole that was established with the Public Act 10-112, establishing a civil forfeiture procedures to seize tainted funds and property from several sexual offenses, including human trafficking. However, we feel like there was a loophole for those around prostitution and those promoting prostitution. We want to make sure that those promoting prostitution are not seeking -- making a profit off of the actions. And instead of just paying the penalty and leaving, we'd like to seize their property in the process.

We're still working on tweaking some of the language around that, but it's an incredibly important bill and it should be noted that this piece of legislation, which has been lead by your own committee member, Representative Rebimbas, has the signature of all 55 women

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REVISIONS OF STATUTES RELATED TO THE AWARD OF ALIMONY. The details of both of those are in our packet.

I'd like to point out that I heard the previous conversation with regards to a task force, and I think as it was pointed out, there was a task force in 2001. There was a 68-page report that came out of that task force, and at the PCSW we're not sure we would object to another task force. We would just want to make sure that it fully addressed the issues of concern.

(HB 6685)

REP. G. FOX: Thank you for your summary of each of those bills. I appreciate -- we appreciate your testimony.

Are there any questions?

Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL: Ms. Younger, great to see you again. I'm a little confused. Do you not want us to move on Senator Cassano's bill?

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TERESA YOUNGER: We don't think Senator Cassano's bill needs to be moved on because we know that the Standardization Committee is working on the guidelines, and we think we'll have the guidelines resolved. We think that there's really no need for it because the guidelines will address the concerns that he's addressed in the legislation.

SENATOR KISSEL: What can be lost?

TERESA YOUNGER: There's no loss. I mean, if you pass it, that's fine. But the guidelines will address this and it doesn't need to be moved forward. We don't think it needs to go anywhere at this point.

First, on the public's list is Daniel Swoverland to be followed by Representative Diana Urban.

DANIEL SWOVERLAND: Good morning.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Good morning, sir.

DANIEL SWOVERLAND: My name is Daniel Swoverland. I'm a father and a former corrections officer. My precious child is a 13-year-old girl. She has not been able to speak to her father in almost six years. I was an involved and exceptional parent who raised for her single-handedly for most of her life. On May 14, 2007, I experienced a serious mental health issue which was brought on by a combination of prescribed medications, including prednisone. I experienced some suicidal ideations, though, I never acted on these emotions. The extent of my expressing my pain then was through a written journal and a text message. At that time, I had primary custody of my beautiful child, and I was excelling as a parent.

HB6685

Some of the details there was criminal charges filed as there was concern that I was going to try to harm myself and my child. Of course, charges were filed after the fact and my child had already been found unharmed and in my care, seat belted in the back of my car. She was never harmed, nor was there any attempt to harm anyone. There was never a history or any previous issues of abuse with my child while she was in my care. My ex-wife who was angered over previous custody issues in her inability to secure any type of control in her life or pulled my daughter away from my love, used this incident to her advantage while I was undergoing a mental health evaluations.

In summary, I was diagnosed that I have no mental health issues and numerous professionals deemed I simply had a reaction to the multitude of mediations, including steroids that were prescribed to me. As charges were abruptly filed, only after the fact of the alleged incident, I followed all of the rules of the criminal court imposed while seeking every opportunity to be with my child, a child that only ever wanted to be with her daddy.

My ex-wife, under the cover of the New Britain criminal court system continued to play cat and mouse between the criminal court system and the Family Court system. There was no communication between the two systems, none.

My ex-wife would tell the Family Court in Hartford that I was a great parent and that she'd follow whatever orders they put in place regarding visitation, and then she'd turn around and tell the criminal court in New Britain that I was psychotic and she was afraid and that she needed a protective order. This was just one example of her dishonesty and how she worked the system to her advantage while alienating me as a parent.

The prosecutor, Brian Preleski, prosecuted my case to the fullest extent possible, and this was co-signed by Judge Joan Alexander. Attorney Brian Preleski should have evaluated facts reasonably and for the betterment of my child and her life. Instead, he played parental politics and ignored every fact presented to him, including the fact that my daughter was physically and sexually abused while in her mother's care. My ex-wife was far from the ideal parent.

The prosecution made a conscious decision to prosecute a case for the benefit of his own professional record. He was told by the court-appointed psychologist that what he was doing was wrong and, in fact, putting me in jail would be a crime against my child. He ignored those words and those of numerous other mental health professionals. He chose to listen to half-truths and fabricated stories of a scorned ex-wife over the voices of reason and the numerous healthcare providers including the very forensic psychiatrist that he had agreed should evaluate me.

The Family Court then ordered that I should have visitation with my daughter at a supervised facility at the minimum and began to regain my custody and repair the relationship that had been damaged for over a year and a half. Amy Horowitz was appointed the GAL in the Family Court. In those hearings, she protested against visitation for reasons that are still unknown.

To her failure, Judge Herbert Barall sided with the numerous mental health professionals and agreed that my daughter, indeed, needs to see her father. Amy Horowitz did not represent the Family Court's orders nor did she try to advocate my daughter in any fashion. In fact, Amy advocated for my wife to have the protective order kept in place which completely opposed the Family Court and its standing orders, the same court in which she was appointed from.

My situation is complex. I do not believe that I am without some fault and have accepted responsibility for the things that I have done wrong. I paid a heavy toll including my loss of a career eight years in the State Department

of Corrections, and I was sentenced to prison, along with probation. I had no criminal history nor harm or attempted to harm anybody. Yet, it appears that people in positions of power didn't accept the same responsibility for what they were doing wrong.

We cannot allow our courts, our GALs, or anyone in decision making positions to continue making decisions for our children that are for their personal gain and their financial gain and that are not in the best interests of the child. We cannot allow scorned spouses to make wild accusations in court that are untrue when the accusations have an effect on the child's future. Finally, we cannot allow individuals in a position of power to act recklessly without any sense of urgency, irresponsibly, without compassion and empathy or outside the scope of any normalcy for our children.

It would also serve parents and children well if the different courts would actually communicate with one another. I hope the tragedy that occurred in my relationship with my daughter never has to occur for any family. Today is five years, ten months and 29 days since I've spoken to, held, talked over the phone, tucked into bed or even been able to write a letter to my princess. My parental rights have basically been terminated. I've gotten remarried and I've raised an exceptional 11-year-old boy over three years without a single issue, yet, if I ask to see my daughter I'm threatened in the New Britain Court with an additional prosecution if I violate a protective order that should have never been put in place.

I, also, feel prosecution and retribution for sharing my story today. I've been pushed to

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places that no parent should be pushed to, yet, I have not broken. Attorneys like Brian Preleski should not be allowed to play schoolyard bully in the court room at the expense of our children. I did nothing to warrant the reaction of that court system, and my daughter has done nothing wrong at all. Yet, we both continue to be punished for almost six years. I have done everything asked of me by the court.

What happened to me, to us, could happen to anybody. This is a tragedy for a beautiful little girl that should never be repeated. I beg of you today to investigate court records if there's any question as to the integrity of what I say to you today. We need change in our system. The system should work as hard as keeping families together as they worked in my case at ripping mine apart. I hope you have the courage to pass this bill today, to make the changes needed to our court system.

In addition, Judge Barall and the Family Court have ordered and forbid my ex-wife to leave the state with my daughter. Amy Horowitz co-signed in front of another judge the legal kidnapping of my daughter and she's been removed from the state. I hope you have the courage, again, to pass this bill today. We need to make changes in our court system. I'm a taxpayer, I'm a voter and I'm a father. I'm asking for your help. Thank you for your time.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Swoverland.

Are there questions for the gentleman?
Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you for sharing your story today, sir. I assume you're in favor of Bill 6685. I didn't really hear which bill number it was.

DANIEL SWOVERLAND: Yes, the parental alienation bill.

REP. SMITH: Thank you.

DANIEL SWOVERLAND: You're welcome, sir.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there any other questions?

Thank you, sir.

DANIEL SWOVERLAND: Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Representative Urban followed by Andrea Cota.

REP. URBAN: Good morning. It's good to be with you. I'm here testifying on House Bill 6690, AN ACT CONCERNING COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS.

You have my testimony, but I would also point out to you that when you go to the testimony on your Judiciary's web site, you will see that there are over a 100 letters in support of this from ordinary citizens who are concerned about the link between animal cruelty and future violent behavior. Out of respect for your committee, I have asked only four people to testify today, not over a hundred, because I think you'll probably be getting the message from the testimony and, unfortunately, Professor Jessica Rubin had to leave because she had a class. She is a professor of law at -- in the law school at UConn and that I will explain to you why she was here in just a -- in just a second.

important on any bill, and you've certainly shown the way to do it, so thanks for your testimony today and know we'll keep talking.

REP. URBAN: Representative Fox that is music to my ears. Thank you so much.

Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you, Representative Urban.

Andrea Cota is next.

REP. G. FOX: Please turn your microphone on if you could.

SENATOR COLEMAN: There's a button in front of you on the -- that activates the microphone.

ANDREA COTA EIGNER: Okay. Can you hear me now?

My name is Andrea Cota Eigner, and I'm from HB 6685 Cromwell, Connecticut. I am a survivor of the corrupt system, the Family Court system. I'm a mother of three boys, who I currently have no contact with because of the Family Court tyranny which began in 2008 in my case. My ex-husband no longer wanted to pay child support, and he used my religious beliefs in God as an excuse to manipulate the already corrupt system.

After four long years of battling the system, I recently filed a federal lawsuit for religious discrimination, a constitutional violation, and also for alienation and damages, upon those responsible for allowing the process to take place. I am awaiting a federal judge's decision regarding the return home of my son who is 12.

I support Bill 6685 regarding shared custody, and I especially support the section contained in the sharing of religious development. A few changes I would like to see made. I think are really important. One of them is a line added to the title, which also would be within the body of the bill, referencing reinforcement of our constitutional rights, not only as American citizens, but also as citizens of Connecticut. Since we are the people of this Constitutional State, we should be setting an example for the rest of the country here.

And another line to be added to the title and within the body of the bill would be that of holding the lawbreakers in the system accountable from the date in which the constitution was written. What we're really asking for in this bill is the reinforcement of our human rights. Everything listed here goes back to human rights, all listed within the Constitution, already given to us in 1787. Now, if we don't reference the Constitution in the title of our bill, we will be allowing these lawbreakers to not be held accountable for any of the laws they have broken prior to the date that this bill passes. And it's also important to hold all of them accountable for the tyranny and abuse that they have caused the many, many families in this state and country so that they will not continue in this behavior.

Also some type of a program in the bill to be put in place to monitor the actions of these people: The judges, lawyers, GALs, their behavior, perhaps, a committee of civilians because, let's face it, you know, once corrupt, you can be retrained but you can always fall back, you have the tendency to fall back to this corrupt behavior, and the money drove

them. I can tell you that. I have proof. I've heard bribes in hallways of the courts about the money that drove these people to do it, the greed. You know, and -- they have no remorse for ripping these children apart, never mind the parents. I don't see my kids -- my little boy in eight months because I spoke up in court and they told me, again, for about the fifth time you talk about God to your son. And I asked them don't you realize this is a constitutional violation? This has been going on for four years in this court in Middletown. And they just ignore any evidence I've ever brought in, they don't care. It's just -- they got paid by my ex so he wouldn't have to pay child support and, therefore, they just keep up their end so they can get repeat business and this what it comes down to. It's -- trafficking our children, you know, I have more detail here if you -- if I have a few more minutes, that I'd like to give you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Actually, you don't. That chime that you just heard -- and this is for the benefit of everybody who's preparing to present to the committee today -- when that chime goes off that means that your three minutes is up. And we would appreciate it if at that moment you begin to summarize the remainder of your testimony.

So I would appreciate it if you moved to summary and then if the members of the committee have questions, they can pose those questions.

ANDREA COTA EIGNER: Okay. All right.

Let's see, well, I'd just like to give you a little bit more detail in my summary about -- just trying to pick something out here so it's

not 'so long. I'll just start here. Well, let me just tell you about, you know, just so you can get an idea about some of the things that go on, the corruption.

The GAL that was assigned to my court -- my case, she actually took me in a side room -- this was before I even got to see my son, it was 10 days in 2008 that I didn't get to see my son -- and you know, they know it -- it's all planned ahead. They do this. They pick specific times, dates, just to put you in a situation where you're -- you'll tremble and fall, which I had done many times, and I'm lucky to be sitting here today that I can tell my story and stand up for my -- my situation, my children and other people's children -- but she takes me in the side room and she tells me, Listen, if you don't sign your son over to your ex, I'll put you away and I'll drug you until you do, and you can believe it or not but, as God is my witness, that's what she told me. And I know several women across the country have been researching this for a long time, talking to people, other victims who have been put away in asylums, drugged beyond knowing who they are so that they don't get to stand up for their rights to raise their children because of money that was involved in payoffs, and this is a serious, serious situation here. We've got, you know, quite involved trafficking, not just in our state but throughout our nation, throughout the world really. I've talked to people across the world, across the country. And it's a shame, you know, that here we are -- the United States, everybody else looked us to us, and they say to us, you're having the same problem, too, now here, the United States, we all thought that you guys had it together. Well, we don't. We are going downhill, you know, and I can tell you more ways than one,

but this is one huge way. And our children, our families are being torn apart by the millions. This isn't a couple hundred families. This isn't thousands. This is by the millions. And pretty soon it's going to be our grandchildren. I don't have any yet, but I probably will soon, I hope, someday if I ever get to meet them. But my two oldest children that are adults now are brainwashed against me because I'm standing up against their father. And he dished out a lot of money to them, too. So it's all about the money, the greed, and if we can't get this, you know, rectified, it's going to go on and on.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you, Ms. Cota.

Are there questions from members of the committee?

Seeing none, thank you for your presentation.

ANDREA COTA EIGNER: Okay. And I hope you can help us all. Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: You're welcome. Thank you.

Brenda Kupchick. Representative Kupchick is next. Representative Kupchick will be followed by Joan Kloth-Zanard.

Good afternoon.

REP. KUPCHICK: Good afternoon.

Good afternoon, Senator Coleman, Senator Kissel, Representative Fox and Representative Rebimbas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. I come before you today to testify in strong support of HB 6690, AN ACT

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is not someone who needs to be let out on an accelerated rehabilitation. So I just ask that -- humbly ask that you would consider this legislation. Thank you for your time.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you for your testimony.

Are there questions for Representative Kupchick?

Seeing none, we appreciate your input.

REP. KUPCHICK: Thank you very much.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Joan Kloth-Zanard. Good morning.

JOAN KLOTH-ZANARD: Thank you. Sorry. Again, I do project well anyways. My name is Joan Kloth-Zanard. I'm from Southbury, Connecticut. And I'm also -- run a non-profit called PAS Intervention, which is for victims of parental alienation. And I've done this for 17 years. I have over 600 members at present, between my two support groups, and that doesn't include my Connecticut -- the Connecticut chapters and the chapters in many other states. Basically, it provides support for victims. But I'm going to tell you a little bit about my husband's story and then go into some other stuff.

HB 6685
(HB 6688) (SB 1155)

In 1996, my husband's second wife began impeding this relationship with the kids, separated for three years with generous and liberal visitation. They were in the process of getting divorced using the same attorney to save money when the ex changed attorneys without notifying him or the joint attorney. She filed a divorce without proper notification, leaving him unaware of the upcoming proceedings. At the divorce proceeding, the ex painted a horrible picture

of my husband, but he was not there to object. The judge took the ex-wife's word for it, everything including child support demands, despite there being no proof of my husband's income. The judge did, however, give him liberal visitation. It took over four and a half years of trying to get child support reduced and, finally, being appointed a pro bono attorney by the judge -- for the judge to finally accept the reduction in child support, but the judge refused to retro back to the original -- to when my husband originally filed the motion to have his child support changed.

Today, 17 years later, my husband is still paying arrearages. Sadly, once his wife -- ex-wife found out that he had gone on with this life and had a new girlfriend, she began to refuse him visitation of his children, and then came the false allegations of abuse, including a false restraining order. It took us eight months of Family Court evaluations to determine that the ex had lied and anything the children knew had been told to them by their mother. It was further determined that the mother refused to accept that her ex-husband had not moved on with his life. This is when I realized that something was wrong, that this wasn't okay. Refusing visitation of -- to children, along with the false allegations of abuse, was psychologically damaging to the children. I began to do Internet research, went back to school to get my master's in marriage and family therapy and that's when I stumbled upon parental alienation. But, by this time, my husband has only seen his children six times since 1996 and has not seen them since 2006. They are 23 and 25, and to this day, still refuse to have a relationship with him.

I'm here because there are hundreds of parents that cannot be here, and I'm speaking for them. These parents come -- come broken due to the failed Family Court system. They're riddled with post traumatic stress syndrome in the form of narcissistic victim syndrome, which will be in our DSM. Many of these parents are good parents, not perfect, but then there is no such thing as a perfect parent, is there? Absent abuse and neglect children have the right to a healthy, happy, successful relationship with both parents. The bills you are hearing about today are indicative of the family law divorce system that in the state is broken. They show how dramatically broken, corrupt they are. We need reforms immediately. In all three of these bills, we are introducing, we are reducing conflict, litigation, animosity between parents so that these children's lives will not be permanently harmed today.

HB 6685 (HB 6688)
(SB 1155)

In addition, we have the tools and we have the resources that the judges and the guardian ad litem can be using to stop the alienation and to help prevent it from getting worse.

In conclusion, please, anything we can do to prevent the snowball effect of custodial interference would be appreciated.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you.

Are there questions for Ms. Kloth-Zanard?

Representative Baram.

REP. BARAM: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm just intrigued a little bit. In the beginning of your testimony you said that in your husband's situation a trial occurred

without his being present. I know that courts go at great lengths to give notice. Was her husband unavailable or out-of-state, or I'm just curious how that --

JOAN KLOTH-ZANARD: No. What happened was the judge -- the sheriff served the papers upon the wrong abode. He never got the paperwork. When his attorney questioned the sheriff, he did not get it writing from the sheriff, who admitted that he served it on the wrong address. When in court, the sheriff changed his testimony and stated, Oh, no, no, I served it. He never served my husband. It would be -- it was -- he admitted to the sheriff -- he couldn't serve my husband because the way my husband's door is -- was at that time, it was sealed so you couldn't flip papers in and around it. He would have either had to hand it to him or stick it in the mailbox and he didn't do either. He admitted to sticking it in the house that was in the front of his trailer where he lived.

REP. BARAM: And so this trial proceeded and when it terminated, it was only afterwards that your husband found out that all of this had happened?

JOAN KLOTH-ZANARD: When he got the divorce papers himself in the mail, that's when he found out he was divorced. And he's like, Whoa, I didn't know I was getting divorced. We tried to overturn it. In addition to the fact that she, his ex, was able to claim income with no proof of income. They hadn't been together for three years. He had been separated for three years with generous and liberal visitation until she found out that he was dating and going out and they had decided to get a divorce and he had met me. She turned around, changed attorneys without notifying anybody.

REP. BARAM: Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there other questions?

If not, thank you very much.

JOAN KLOTH-ZANARD: Thank you very much for your time.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Senator Hartley, Joan Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY: Good afternoon --

SENATOR COLEMAN: Good afternoon.

SENATOR HARTLEY: -- members of the Judiciary Committee, Chairman Coleman and Chairman Fox, and thank you for this opportunity to appear before you, I guess, this afternoon.

For the record, my name is Joan Hartley, and I appear before you to speak in favor of Senate Bill 1156, AN ACT CONCERNING THE RIGHT TO A JURY TRIAL IN CERTAIN ACTION ALLEGING DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES.

And I appear before you with Attorney Michelle Holmes, who I'm proud to say is in the city of Waterbury and, parenthetically, has opened her office in the historic district of Hillside in one of our beautiful historic homes. I can't help but talk about this because it's a very proud part of our downtown core, but that's not why we're here.

The genesis of SB 1156 is a conversation that I had with Attorney Holmes, who specializes in civil rights and discriminatory employment practice. And in conversation with Attorney Holmes, it was apparent that there -- in

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Sharon Dornfield -- Dornfeld.

SHARON DORNFELD: Sharon Dornfeld. Thank you. I am appearing today on behalf of the Family Law section of the Connecticut Bar Association. I had submitted earlier written testimony regarding House Bill 6685. I was not present this morning for Representative Fasano's testimony, but I understand that he -- on the basis of his testimony, it's not likely that 6685 will be pursued right now; and therefore, I will spare you my further comments regarding the specifics of that bill.

I also understand that the suggestion was proposed for some sort of a task force or a commission regarding guardians ad litem. And I would simply say that on behalf of the Family Law Section that we would be more than happy to cooperate in any way if such a task force or commission were formed and, in fact, would certainly hope to be included as participants in that venture.

So long as I have a few moments remaining, I would just also say, individually, and not as a representative of the Family Law Section, that I am a practicing family law lawyer, have been so for more than 25 years, and I would personally concur with the remarks that will be coming shortly from Attorney Arnold Rutkin on behalf of our section that 1155 should be -- should not be passed. I would absolutely oppose that. So unless there are some questions at this point, I will spare you my further comments.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Do members have questions?

Representative Rebimbas.

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REP. REBIMBAS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And good afternoon. I just wanted to thank you for coming up and taking the time to testify, obviously, on behalf of these bills that are before us.

HB6685

I've had several conversations with people, both people who had testified and also members of this committee, regarding the GAL-AMC new training program and, certainly, I think it's been leaps and bounds this certification training requirement and, certainly, look forward to having your input then if this does turn into a task force, as I know that you are certainly a dedicated -- I will say expert in the field, so I do appreciate the work that you've done in the certification training program which I -- for full disclosure and certainly have already communicated with several people that it's a program that I participated through and, again, I think it's leaps and bounds from GAL not being required to be trained or certified or having the appropriate guidelines to now having this program in the state of Connecticut and requiring each GAL and AMC to participate in before being appointed in any case but, certainly, look forward to your continued cooperation and input on any task force moving forward.

SHARON DORNFELD: Thank you, Representative Rebimbas. As you indicated, we've been doing these training programs. We have now trained 1100 people. And as you're probably aware, our current rules now provide that only persons who have been through this 30-hour training may be appointed as attorneys for minor children or as guardian ad litem, so I agree with you that I

think that we have made great progress here in having, at least, a baseline for qualifications for people who are appointed and serve in those capacities so thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there other members with questions?

If not, thank you very much for your testimony.

SHARON DORNFELD: Thank you, Senator Coleman.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Chief Joseph Gaudett.

Chief Gaudett will be followed by Judge Elliott Solomon.

CHIEF JOSEPH GAUDETT: Good afternoon. Thank you, Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Joe Gaudett. I am the chief of police in Bridgeport, and I'm here to let you know that I'm fully supportive of proposed House Bill 6682, AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL. And I appreciate the opportunity to address you on this important topic because I believe we can't leave the fate of Connecticut's children to chance.

Last year, the Bridgeport Police Department and the Board of Education entered into a memorandum of understanding where we clearly delineated our goals and criteria for police and the school system to work together to make our schools safe and reduce the number of school-based arrests. That effort combined with a comprehensive review of security procedures in every school has made the Bridgeport school system one of the safest in

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creating a graduated response model, specific to the district that discusses and clarifies who deals with what kinds behaviors and how they deal with them and who should be involved so there was no additional money put in for this.

REP. GONZALEZ: Okay. Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there others with questions?

Seeing none, thank you very much.

Representative Laura Hoydick is next.

Abigail Gilbert.

ABIGAIL GILBERT: Is the red light -- it's on, okay.

Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for hearing me today. Before I speak on the bill, sponsored at my request, I would like to vocalize my support of HB 6685. My new husband fought an uphill battle to gain joint and shared custody of his boys, and in doing so spent tens of thousands of dollars. He's an amazing father to his boys and has become the most wonderful gift to my children. There's no presumptive better parent. Children deserve to have relationships maintained at the highest level whenever possible.

Unfortunately, there are those times when removing rights is consistent with what is in the child's best interest. It is to this issue I will primarily direct my testimony today, regarding SB 178, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONTINUATION OF CHILD SUPPORT OBLIGATIONS AFTER THE TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS DUE TO ABUSE OR NEGLECT OF THE CHILD.

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as school resource officers. So, it's helpful to us to hear from you.

CHIEF MARC MONTMINY: Thank you so much.

REP. G. FOX: Thank you.

Jerry Mastrangelo.

JERRY MASTRANGELO: Hello. Good afternoon.

REP. G. FOX: Good afternoon.

JERRY MASTRANGELO: My name is Jerry Mastrangelo, and I reside in East Haven, Connecticut. I'm a member of the National Parents Organization with over 50,000 members across the country. I've been a business owner in Connecticut for the past 34 years and, currently, have 130 employees. I am here today in support of Raised Bill Number 6685 on shared parenting.

HB 6688
SB 1155

The story I'm about to share with you involves parental alienation and a broken Family Court system that has received a tremendous amount of media attention and more support than almost any other family case in Connecticut. Although my story is almost over, I hope that the changes made will prevent this from happening to other families. This is about my fight to protect my children's right to love and be loved by both parents.

My story began on July 1, 1999, when I became the proud father of triplets, who were born premature weighing less than 2 pounds. Unfortunately, my marriage ended in December of 2007. However, I was awarded joint legal physical custody of my children with approximately 40 percent of parenting time. For nearly 3 years, I enjoyed picking up my

children from school, helping them with their homework, spending quality time together, going to church, going on vacations, visiting grandparents and extended family, celebrating birthdays and holidays together, as well, as watching my children grow up.

In October 2010, this all changed. For the past two and a half years, my children have not had me in their lives. Not only have my children been alienated from me but also from my entire family as well. My children have been taught to hate me, to ignore me, to hang up on me, to call me names I can't even repeat. This is what happens in parental alienation. One parent will brainwash and manipulate a child into believing the other parent is all bad, leading to the total rejection of that parent. The leading experts in the country agree that this is a form of child abuse and neglect.

In July 2011, I had no other choice than to turn to the New Haven Family Court for help. In doing so, I filed six motions in order to get contempt issues heard, existing court orders modified -- enforced and modified. I learned very quickly that the Family Court was not on my side. I've spent over \$150,000, and soon I learned that there was no sense of urgency, which is very important when dealing with alienation. I learned that there's a lack of education as it relates to alienation. I learned about all the games that are played on the third floor of the New Haven Court -- and I'm not saying that disrespectfully. The stall tactics and delays which only benefit the best interest of the attorneys and their wallets, not the best interest of the children. I learned what it means to have a court-appointed guardian ad litem at \$300 per hour, as well as

\$300 per hour for an AMC. I learned how a GAL can be unethical, biased and completely negligent in carrying out their duties to protect the best interests of a child. Connecticut GALs have no accountability and have the luxury of full immunity.

I learned how it felt for an AMC to ask me in court to pull out my wallet while on the stand to see what credit cards I have, what the limits were and as well as what the balances were. I also learned how a parent could easily become emotionally and financially bankrupt in order to get court orders enforced so they can be a part of their children's lives.

Connecticut family laws need to change. Children need both parents in their lives, in the absence of abuse and neglect. Children need shared parenting and parents need incentives to follow court orders and sanctions when they don't. Parental alienation cases need to be heard quickly and acted upon immediately. Time works against the alienated child and parent in these cases.

In many other states, judges who identify parental alienation will remove the child from the abusive and neglectful parent. This is no different than cases involving sexual and physical abuse. The child is immediately removed.

I am testifying today on behalf of hundreds of families that have been destroyed due to our broken Family Court system. Family laws need to change. Safeguards need to be put in places so that GALs perform their duties according to Connecticut statute. Please support Raised Bills 6685, 6688 and 1155. Thank you for your time.

REP. G. FOX: Thank you, Mr. Mastrangelo.

Are there questions or comments?

Representative Albis.

REP. ALBIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Jerry, good to see you today. Thank you so much for coming up to testify.

JERRY MASTRANGELO: Thank you.

REP. ALBIS: Now you were here for -- for Senator Fasano's testimony. Correct?

JERRY MASTRANGELO: Yes, I was.

REP. ALBIS: How -- how would you feel about his proposal to establish a task force to look into some of these issues with a little more scrutiny?

JERRY MASTRANGELO: I think it would be a great start because, again, right now, we've seen -- and I'm aware of literally dozens and dozens of cases, and we all have the same theme. And when we're talking about GALs, for instance, the thing that I never quite understood is if they're not acting in the capacity of an attorney, then why should they be charging attorney prices? It just simply doesn't make sense. And when a parent has to walk away from your children because of the financial stress that is being put on that family, it is not fair for that -- for that parent to have to decide between the financial disaster that he or she may face and being a part of their children's lives and having the children be a part of their lives. So I do agree that this

task force will be is -- and I would hope that the task force is not only made up of attorneys that there can be some laypeople and -- and -- and people involved that can have some input.

REP. ALBIS: Thank you for that, and I do thank you for coming to me with your story and -- and so I can hear your point of view.

This is an issue that I -- I haven't been familiar with, and I think you -- you made the point to me a -- a few weeks ago that it's -- it's something where if you're not -- if you haven't gone through the system, it's hard to understand it. So it's been a huge help to me to -- to try to wrap my head around these issues for you to -- to explain to me and for you to come testify here today so thank for --

JERRY MASTRANGELO: Thank you, Representative Albis.

REP. G. FOX: Thank you for your testimony today.

JERRY MASTRANGELO: Thank you.

REP. G. FOX: Sarah Esty.

SARAH ESTY: Hello.

REP. G. FOX: Hello.

SARAH ESTY: I'm Sarah Esty, and I'm here on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children to speak in favor of Bill 6682, AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL.

You should have my written testimony so I will not try to read it for you. I, actually, wanted to address some of the questions that

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that -- that part of the bill's going to continue on because it is important to have -- to be able to evaluate the work you're doing. However, there's also certain things that are not disclosed for a reason. So we'll have to look -- we'll have to continue to work on that but thank you very much for your testimony.

SARAH ESTY: And we have a report that should be coming out in the next couple of weeks on this topic so I'll make sure everybody gets a copy of that.

REP. G. FOX: Okay. And not to rush your report but just so you know, our -- our deadline is April 19th to vote the bills out so if you --

SARAH ESTY: I understand.

REP. G. FOX: -- So whenever you get us that it'd be terrific so thank you.

Arnold Rutkin.

ARNOLD RUTKIN: I hope the clock's not running already.

REP. G. FOX: Don't worry, now --

Good to see you, Attorney Rutkin.

ARNOLD RUTKIN: Good afternoon, Representative Fox, Senator Kissel.

So I'm Arnold Rutkin. I practice law in the Law Firm of Rutkin, Oldham & Griffin. I grew up in Bridgeport. I went through Legal Aid as a young lawyer, and you can see I'm not young anymore.

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cutter, as you know, and -- and guidelines are cookie cutter, at least, without any investigation whatsoever.

We think -- what the legislature should do is have a consensus through the legislative study commission, and I know I'm -- I'm more than out of time. I do have a few comments about the presumption of shared custody bill, if I might.

HB 6685

REP. G. FOX: Actually, I would be interested to hear what your thoughts are on that and we're in the question and answer period so the time's kind of --

ARNOLD RUTKIN: Oh, good.

REP. G. FOX: Well, it doesn't mean -- within limits but before you --

Do any members have questions of Attorney Rutkin because I may have a couple but anyone has any questions first?

Okay. Well, I do on the presumption of shared custody. I know we spoke about this in the hallway, and I asked you if you had a chance to look at it and to see what your -- what your thoughts were because I know there are some who are very -- obviously, you've heard from some of the people here who are -- who have had some really difficult situations in our courts. And they are very much in favor of it. I think, I don't know if you were here when Senator Fasano began the meeting --

ARNOLD RUTKIN: Yes.

REP. G. FOX: -- and he discussed not only that bill but also the GAL system and attorneys for minor children and also it's not an easy -- it's not

an easy process. It's not one that we can necessarily answer quickly. And it's one that requires some experience and expertise.

And I did ask you if you had a chance to look at that bill?

ARNOLD RUTKIN: I did.

REP. G. FOX: And I'm interested to hear what your thoughts are so.

ARNOLD RUTKIN: You know I was struck when I was listening to Senator Fasano and some of the other people who've been testifying here today that people on your committee hear some of the terrible stories that I hear in my office. You know, we -- we hear a lot of the same things.

With regard to the GAL/AMC issue, speaking for myself only because I'm not here to talk for the Family Law section in that regard, but I feel confident that if your committee sought fit to have a study commission with regard to what's going on in these custody cases that we would gladly participate.

I can tell you I actually have little experience in it having gone through one myself, a custody case. I was -- it was a difficult one, and I paid alimony in my life time. I'm not embarrassed to say so. I'm proud to say so. And the -- the issue and I took the GAL/AMC training. I don't do that kind of work much but I wanted to see what it was like, and I do -- I do sometimes. And I -- I do think that there are improvements that can be made. I think the regional family trial docket we have is a great thing. It's a -- it's a signature court for the country. It's

not for the world, but I do think that there could be improvement. Some of the complaints that I heard are -- are with justification, and I think a study commission to discuss some of that would be useful.

With regard to the -- the bill, the shared custody bill, I was troubled by it only in that it's just another vague term, "shared custody." It is, by the way, in the statute but parts two and three are already in place. We already have virtually mandated parenting plans and there's already a civil penalty. It's called contempt, civil contempt, if you do something like that. So I don't think this bill adds anything, but by the same token, if you are thinking of setting up a overall commission including the AMC/GAL issue that would be a good thing to talk about.

REP. G. FOX: Can I ask you this in -- in your practice over recent -- the last decade or so, have you seen more situations where the parents would enter into a shared parenting plan just given that so many times both parents are working, their schedules are --

ARNOLD RUTKIN: Absolutely.

REP. G. FOX: I mean -- and -- and my -- I always understand the big issue. One of the issues with the shared parenting plan is that if it's really a equal time or very close to equal time they're -- the court can then stay not enter a support order, a child support order, is that your experience or not so much?

ARNOLD RUTKIN: They're other factors that go into it --

REP. G. FOX: Yeah. Okay.

ARNOLD RUTKIN: -- under the child support guidelines.

REP. G. FOX: That's only one of the factors.

ARNOLD RUTKIN: Shared custody does not mean equal.

REP. G. FOX: Well, I know -- I think -- I know shared custody -- well, shared custody, then there's shared parenting plans. I always think shared parenting plans not -- not equal 50/50 but closer more -- more so than the every other weekend type plan. I don't know.

ARNOLD RUTKIN: And hint of that is --

REP. G. FOX: Well, I'm interested how would you define it that's what I'm saying.

ARNOLD RUTKIN: Well, years ago, and I can't remember how many there were bills every year on presumption of joint custody and that didn't go anywhere. It started in California, and we tried it here and but I -- I would say that the default position for most people and for the court is shared custody. It may not be 50/50.

I -- I wrote a paper many years ago called, "Continued Custody," and I was trying to promote the idea that people should continue to do, in divorce, what they did when they were married, rather than making the kids, like property, you know, something that they can gain control of.

I think the default for judges in this state is to share custody, but it may not be 50/50. And if I had a -- a suggestion, it would be for people to realize that kids get older and their needs change because you agree to something

when they're five and three, it's not probably going to be relevant to when they're eleven and nine.

And that's one of the issues people get boxed into a permanent parenting plan and they unfortunately are sold on the idea that it can change but really it doesn't.

REP. G. FOX: Okay. Well -- well, thank you.

I don't know if there's any questions.

Representative Adinolfi.

REP. ADINOLFI: Thank you.

You just brought something to mind. I just received a letter about two days ago from somebody that has shared custody. And what's happening that every time he goes to pick up the children, for the last two years, his wife is never there with children -- his ex-wife is never there with the children. He never gets them. And when he goes to the courts and tries to complain, nothing ever happens.

In other words, if I say the shared custody has to happen, but they don't enforce it. I don't know if you run into that.

ARNOLD RUTKIN: Well, you hear stories about that, Representative Adinolfi, but the problem is that the stories you hear may not be the full story but has that ever happened? Yeah, I think there are times that judges don't enforce things as quickly as they ought to but, generally speaking, I -- I think that the courts are very mindful of children's rights and that they have a right to two parents and generally support the parenting plan.

And then we have the -- the family social workers in the system who are terrific and -- and often are a big help. And it never -- most of the time, you know, there's probably 14,000 divorces a year in Connecticut. I don't exactly know the number with lots of children. Most of the time it works fine, but it -- it's only the ones you hear about that don't work, unfortunately.

And -- and I agree with you, though. If there's a court order, it should be supported and that person should be seeing the kids. And I have seen if it happened to be woman who you were talking about withholding the kids, I think you were, I've seen judges hold women in contempt for failure to do that and have sanctions against them. I've seen it with my own eyes.

REP. ADINOLFI: I'll talk to him again.

Thank you.

ARNOLD RUTKIN: Sure.

REP. G. FOX: Thank you very much for your testimony.

ARNOLD RUTKIN: Thank you.

By the way, thank you so much for all your hard work on the gun bill. You made us all very, very, very, proud.

REP. G. FOX: Thank you.

We're getting ready to move on with that one.

A VOICE: (Inaudible.)

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REP. G. FOX: All right back to the public hearing agenda.

Peter Szymonik -- Szymonik.

Good afternoon, sir.

PETER SZYMONIK: Good afternoon.

REP. G. FOX: Hi.

PETER SZYMONIK: Good afternoon. My name is Peter Szymonik, and I live in Berlin, Connecticut. I spent most of my career working in or for the legal industry itself. I worked for six years at the same law firm that produced Senator Blumenthal, Justice Bright, Supreme Court Justice McLachlan, and Chief State Justice Rogers. And one of the hallmarks of the law firm we work for is we place a strong emphasis on ethics.

I'm an expert in legal operations, business process improvement, and legal spend management. I currently work as an executive at a major healthcare company where mental health issues are a big deal. I'm a Polish immigrant whose family came to this country, worked very hard and placed family and education first, and I'm the father of two wonderful young boys, one with special needs.

I'm here today in support of bill 6685, 6688 and 1155 because I and my family have suffered tremendously from the inherent dysfunction in our state's family court system. Like many others, I have been financially and otherwise devastated solely to protect the best interest of my sons and my ability to be an equal parenting father for them.

I'm speaking here today on behalf of many family law attorneys that I've come to know who are also struggling and quitting the practice of family law, given their dismay of what's happening in our state's family courts and what it's become. In devastation, they've seen it cause for countless parents, children and families.

I'm here today because I know the answer to Senator Doyle's question of why there's been an explosion of pro se litigants in our family courts and why the waits for hearing times have approached four to five months. The crisis in our state family court mirrors what it is also happening in New York, New Jersey, Maine and Ohio, other states where family court systems been allowed to operate with impunity in an ineffective manner and without any system of checks and balances.

Most notably how the court system engages yet does not monitor or oversee the actions of performance of AMCs, GALs and other court-appointed experts and as judges routinely outsourced the judicial authority to them. Independent contractors are allowed to bill parents extraordinary sums of money for services they do not perform, perform poorly or are biased to whichever party pays them more and is basic human, civil, parental rights are trampled, as well as internationally recognized rights of a child.

As one example of the dysfunction, I would ask if any of the panel members believe that forcing a parent to liquidate a child's college funds under the threat of imprisonment. Funds which took years to amass and funneling the money to an unethical AMC or GAL represents an

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action in the best interest of a child. This happened to me, my family, and my sons. This happens in our family court system each and every day.

Judges also require that AMCs and GALs be paid ahead of child support. Does this make any sense given that most AMCs and GALs almost never meet with the children they're assigned to represent. Imagine the impact this has on the fate of the parents, citizens, taxpayers have in our state judiciary to do the right thing and to act in a proper, ethical and moral manner. Imagine if all the money that you worked for years to save for your children was taken from you in an instant in this manner.

Yet, not every state has this issue or problem. With a notable difference that their AMCs and GALs are monitored and do not report to the Judiciary. With a notable exception that in those states the courts discretion has been moderated and shared parenting is a standard and a norm, rather than something which divorced parents are forced to fight for to the point of being permanently financially devastated, which is the norm in the State of Connecticut.

Our state must do far better in the actual best interest of children, parents, grandparents and families. Our state must do far better for citizens and taxpayers.

Bill 6685 moves our state one step in the right direction and mirrors what is already law in Arizona and is being considered in only six other states.

What's missing in bill 6685, which I understand we just added, is a further clause which would

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further reinforce its intent by mandating sanctions against parents who knowingly make false representations to the court as part of any parent-related motion.

Bill 6685 must be passed because it represents a start of modernizing our state's approach to family law in a manner that is actually in the best interest of children and families, but it's just a start.

Thank you.

REP. G. FOX: Thank you, sir.

Thank you for your testimony today.

Are there questions?

I don't see any, but you did submit written testimony, as well I saw that --

PETER SZYMONIK: I did, yes.

REP. G. FOX: Well, thank you.

PETER SZYMONIK: Thank you.

REP. G. FOX: Thank you very much.

Stephen Repka.

STEPHEN REPKA: Good afternoon.

REP. G. FOX: Good afternoon.

STEPHEN REPKA: My greatest fear was having to speak in front of nobody. I'm glad you're still here.

HB 6685

I want to first thank the committee to allow us to speak on Raised Bill 6685. I apologize from the start if you've heard the same story all day. Unfortunately, all of our stories have a common thread. I'm very appreciative that this subject is getting its proper public attention. I've lived it firsthand for -- for the past six years. I completely understand that we all have our issues and listening to another person problems is not on anyone's top ten list.

I'm here today to voice my children -- to be the voice of my children who have not had a voice in our current legal system. I recently wrote the guardian ad litem in our case to update on her on the proposed bills. Unlike others that may testify today, I have had a positive experience with my lawyer, GAL and family court judge.

The issue was that they all did not have a single law to counteract my ex-wife's destructive behavior. I sit in front of you, a Connecticut resident that has exhausted our current legal system.

To quote my GAL from a email she sent me on a February 27, 2013: I appreciate your positive regard, especially given how difficult of time you've had with the court process and with Jill and the girls. I feel very strongly about parental alienation syndrome and the corrosive effects it has on our families, especially the kids, sadly your girls, which will have so much to overcome because of Jill's damaging and destructive behavior.

I went -- personally, I went to court in 2011. I thought -- I thought it would be more powerful to use the words of the judge that ruled in my case. Well, before Bill 6685 was a

thought, Judge Mark Taylor was able to decipher the true issues in my case. However, he was unable to help my family, as he did not have a law to cite. I'd like to select -- cite selected quotes I select -- I gave you my full transcript on this.

I took -- I quote, all I've heard here today suggests that you, sir, have done everything imaginable to bring the reconciliation between you and your children. The question is always how to unlock the problem. This is a court of law. I've often commented that in Family Court it seems to be an intersection between social sciences, such as psychology and sociology and the law. And the question is always where the lines to be drawn exercising judicial authority. I often reflect on whether or not, at times, the use of judicial authority in what would otherwise be a personal matter is helpful or effective.

Some very competent psychologists and other family therapists have been continuously involved in this family's life since 2007. I also have the impression that Mr. Repka is unforgiving; however, I'm not sure the degree which that affects Jill's ability to provide an example to her daughters as how the intersection is to occur. She's the person they look to understand how the interaction, perhaps, should be between her and her family - - her father and it seems that a very, very difficult one for her to constructively engage in.

So I, again, have -- you have my whole testimony and my testimony on that.

Unfortunately, there's just been no law that's been able -- no legal system that's been able

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to help us with -- with -- with what's happened
in here with the parental alienation.

REP. G. FOX: Well, thank you.

And I know you -- you referenced the earlier
testimonies. We're also beginning to hear from
a number of people today.

And are there questions at all?

No, I don't see any but thank you very much --

STEPHEN REPKA: Thank you.

REP. G. FOX: And -- Sandra Staub.

Hello.

SANDRA STAUB: Good afternoon.

Representative Fox, distinguish members of the
committee -- Judiciary Committee, I'm Sandra
Staub, legal director for the American Civil
Liberties Union of Connecticut. And I'm here
to testify in favor of House Bill 6682, AN ACT
CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARDS OF
EDUCATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL.

The ACLU of Connecticut joins with the previous
two chiefs who testified, and I take great
pleasure in saying that, in fully supporting
this bill as a necessary step towards juvenile
justice --

REP. G. FOX: There's always a first. Right.

SANDRA STAUB: It's a second, I was here last week -

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REP. G. FOX: Okay.

SANDRA STAUB: Yeah, that's not publicly available on the -- the web sites that we searched. We were only able to -- to confirm whether or not there was a school resource officer. And you know, they're I think six cities that have been, you know, part of the testimony today from different organizations with a great and dramatic results in lowering arrests. I haven't heard of other cities and towns, but there is a model, you know, that the juvenile Justice Alliance has put together for -- for them to take up. This bill would just, you know, mandate that they take it up and improve the situation.

REP. O'DEA: Thank you very much.

Thank you Mr. Chair.

REP. G. FOX: Thank you.

Are there other questions or comments?

Thank you.

SANDRA STAUB: Thank you.

REP. G. FOX: Timothy -- Timothy Gelling.

Hello.

TIMOTHY GELLING: Good afternoon.

REP. G. FOX: Good afternoon.

TIMOTHY GELLING: Thank you for the time today. My name is Timothy Gelling. I'm the father of two children: Victoria, age 15; and Timothy Liam, age 12. I'm here today in support of Bill 1155, Bill 6688 and Bill 6685 on shared custody.

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I'd like to echo the points made Mr. Mastrangelo and others. They stated so eloquently.

My case started in July of 2005, when I first heard -- my threats of full custody psychological evaluations, guardian ad litem and attorneys for minor children, all foreign to me. Attorneys wielded these terms I never imagined would be part of my life. Now eight years and 235 entries in my case detail later, I am all too familiar with them.

My dissolution took six days of trial and a total of 20 months. I was married for nine years, ordered to pay alimony for seven. I was granted joint custody and -- and generous parenting time.

I met more lawyers, judges, court officers, police officers, family service workers, therapists, forensic psychologists, GALs and DCF workers than I care to remember. My experience is of a system that allows a parent to disregard orders deny and disrupt parenting time, use children as messengers to pick up alimony checks and instruct children to keep secrets and outright lie.

My only recourse to this behavior is motions, paying marshals, waiting weeks and months for dates from a system that does not hold anyone responsible for not showing up or walking out of a courtroom. The -- the idea that contempts are found. It has not been my -- my experience. You know, it's a broken system that has you wait for hours to be heard, sometimes running out of hours in the day to hear you that shuffles you from court to family services to court to hallway, and so on.

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Countless times, I have filed motions for contempt and waited for my day in court only to leave with the same agreement I went in with. This cycle repeated over and over in the last eight years. There's no continuity in the system. No one has ever reviewed my case to detect the patterns and question why we we're back, yet, again.

The result of this is that my children have lost out on the love and time they deserve from me, their aunts, uncles, cousins. Eventually, the stress on my children drove them from me. It became easy to turn away from me than endure the pre-imposed visit trauma. I love my children; my children love me. We sang, told stories and laughed and did all the things you're supposed to do in a father-child relationship from eating ice cream to doing homework.

One day, I went to pick up my children from school and they were not there, again. I couldn't reach them, again, and the next week the same thing and the next weekend they never showed up. Ultimately, my daughter, at age 12, told me she didn't want to see my anymore. She didn't love me. My eight-year-old son looked me in the eye, lips quivering about to burst into tears and said he didn't want to see me anymore. They had had enough and, God bless them, they don't deserve the anguish.

They will never get back the time we have lost, the holidays, the birthdays, time spent going to the movies, eating pancakes or doing algebra, laughing and loving their dad. I have not seen my children for two and a half years. Reunification therapy, psych evaluations, supervised visitation, more motions, this is

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what it would take to regain the love of my children. It breaks my heart. I'm here today and hope that this will not ever happen to any other children.

My case is not unique. I've met many other parents, women and men, who have had the same experiences. It is uncanny how similar the stories are: the tactics, the false allegations, et cetera. These are the norm in our current system. It's too easy to manipulate. As a family court judge said to me, it is a broken system, but it is the only one we have. That is not acceptable.

It's time to stop the abuse of the system and the abuse of children. I believe shared parenting is critically important to children's emotional, mental and physical health. That's every child's right to have the loving care of both parents and that better lives for our children through family court reform is possible.

Thank you.

REP. G. FOX: Thank you and thanks for your testimony this afternoon.

Are there questions?

Well, thank you for being here today.

TIMOTHY GELLING: Thank you.

REP. G. FOX: Howard Cooper, Sally Oldham -- is it Sally?

Attorney Oldham will be followed by Amy Harrell.

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Good afternoon.

SARAH OLDHAM: Good afternoon, Representative Fox and distinguish members of the committee. I'm here today to testify in support of Raised Bill 66 -- 6688 and in opposition to Raised Bill 1155.

HB 6685

I am president of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. The Academy has voted with a -- by a significant majority to support Raised Bill 6688 and oppose Raise Bill 1155. I also address you as an individual matrimonial attorney practicing in Connecticut for the last 25 years. I was chairman of the Connecticut Bar Association Family Law Section, and I'm a fellow of the American Bar Foundation. I'm active in the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and the International Academy of Matrimony Lawyers, which means I travel extensively talking to matrimonial lawyers both here and abroad.

In general, Connecticut is to be commended for its excellent statutory scheme when it comes to matrimonial matters. Despite statewide budgetary problems and the fact that our courts are inundated with self-represented parties, there is no hard and fast evidence that our statutory scheme is broken or needs to be -- in need a major overhaul.

For those of you not familiar with the intricacies of Connecticut's alimony section, Statute 46b-82, there are a number of statutory criteria the court must consider -- and others have mentioned those -- but they are important to help the parties -- the station of the parties, occupations, employability,

punitive and discriminatory towards the lower earning spouse.

I think that there is serious problems with the guidelines.

There may be some parts of Bill 1155 which are useful, but they should be separated out. The bill is too complex and each piece of it should be addressed as a separate bill.

Raised Bill 6688 is the consensus bill. Judge Solomon spoke at length about how this is a bill that was resulted -- its own committee that you, Representative Fox, put together and we support that, the academy supports the provisions in 6688.

I'd like to speak just briefly to 6685. The -- the issue of parental alienation is a very complex issue. And it's a very -- it's -- it's very heartrending to sit here and listen to the stories that the fathers are telling here. Speaking not on behalf of the Academy but myself, as an attorney -- and you should know I was a school psychologist for 15 years before I became an attorney -- the -- the mental health research on parental alienation is very extensive. There's a whole array of information that's being developed out there, and it's very complex. It's a very complex dynamic, and it develops for -- for a variety of reasons. And I think that the idea of a study group to look into this would be very useful because there's a lot of information out there.

And just as with 6688, doing an investigation into the research, we should be looking to the social sciences and the economic sciences to guide us in what will work for Connecticut's

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citizens, not just adopting something which is at anybody's best guess of what might work.

Thank you very much.

REP. G. FOX: Thank you. Thanks for your testimony.

Are there any questions?

Well, thanks --

SARAH OLDHAM: Thank you.

REP. G. FOX: -- for being here.

Amy Harrell followed by Michael Cassello.

Good afternoon.

AMY HARRELL: Good afternoon, Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and fellow members of the Judiciary Committee. I'm Amy Harrell. I'm the president of Connecticut Votes for Animals, and I'm also a resident of Vernon, Connecticut.

I'd like to express my support and the support of the organization for House Bill 6690, AN ACT CONCERNING COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS. Many before me have -- have made strong cases in favor of this bill, and I'd like to just echo their comments.

I was also very dismayed to learn recently from an OLR report that during the past ten years over 80 percent of animal cruelty cases are either unprosecuted or dismissed from the court; that amounts to over 3,000 cases of animal cruelty.

To me, this number not only indicates a large scale injustice to animals, but it is also

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represents a lot of missed opportunities to identify and stem early violent behavior.

Connecticut is very fortunate to have a strong and talented network of animal advocates who are always ready to volunteer. This bill would mobilize that network to help ensure that more of these animal abuse cases are properly represented; that justice is served on behalf of animal victims of cruelty and their loving families; and finally that potentially violent citizens are identified before their behavior escalates.

Our state only stands to gain from this bill, which beautifully brings together advocates to speak for the voiceless.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify today, and I hope you'll continue to support this important piece of legislation.

REP. G. FOX: Thank you. Thanks for your testimony this afternoon.

Are there questions?

Well, thanks, thanks for being here.

Michael Cassello.

Hello.

MICHAEL CASSELLO: Good afternoon. Today, I'm here in support of Bills Number 1155, 6688 and 6685. My name is Michael E. Cassello. I've come here today, together with part of a national group - of a national parent organization.

SB 178

The bills that you are hearing today are indicative of the family law divorce system in

the State of Connecticut that is dramatically broken down and need -- in much need of reform. I will state that in these three bills we are reducing conflict, litigation and the animosity between parents so that the lives of the children will not. They will be irreparably harmed or have been under today's court system. I have witnessed and lived this firsthand. Our bills before you are not perfect but are a start to build upon.

I'm a hard-working self-employed professional that has overcome much adversity and challenges of a congenital birth defect. I have never and, have to this date, never felt my handicap to be unlimited to my opportunities at any point of my life. My proudest moment and accomplishment is being the father of six bright children that have the best of qualities of both of their parents. They thrive at school, have an incredible thirst for knowledge, are kind, polite and giving to their parents -- their peers.

Sadly, I have not seen or have visitation of two of my youngest daughters in some three years now since my divorce. I have been stripped of my legal rights as a parent. I've been financially devastated by, both, the economy and necessary litigation, as well wrongly incarcerated. (Inaudible) I will mention not a proud moment, nor a recommendation for a vacation destination.

I would like to think that I am somewhat educated, but I was quickly dismissed and mistreated as a pro se within the system and quickly learned it is a true gentlemen's club. My children had a GAL and, in my opinion, that was less than adequate and never followed up on any orders and never held accountable.

In closing, be assured that my motive -- my motives are strictly for the well-being of my children and many like them. It is ridiculous to think that any parent would not want to be any part of their child's life or provide for them.

With that said, I don't think that one goes in hand with the other. Reform is a need. The system is broken and needs to be rebuilt. I stand before you and support the changes in the statute recommended by the Reform Commission that are in Bill 1155, Bill 6688, as well as 6685 on the shared custody.

As a side note, I am also here in favor of Bill 178 that came to my attention today, as I know Abigail, both personally and professionally, and I think that is a totally different take on it and should be reviewed as well.

I ask that you pass -- it is not only represents the start of modernizing but, more importantly, will produce much happier children.

Thank you for your time.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you.

Are there questions?

Seeing no questions, thank you for your testimony.

Anna Doroghazi is next.

ANNA DOROGHAZI: Good afternoon, Senator Coleman, Senator Doyle, Representative Rebimbas and members of the committee. My name is Anna

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AMY MILLER: Good afternoon, Senator Coleman,
representatives of the committee.

My name is Amy Miller, and I'm the program and public policy director at the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund. CWEALF is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives.

For almost 40 years, CWEALF has provided information, referral and support to women seeking guidance on how to proceed with divorce or how to respond to a divorce. We have spoken to thousands of women. The people who contact our office, generally, have incomes above the federally defined poverty levels with the majority with an income of about \$25,000 a year with at least one child.

As you can imagine, most of the cost -- most of the people who contact us are women, around 80 percent, but that percentage has seen a decline over the past few years, which it used to be closer to 90, as men become aware of the service. And in fact, our goal is to ultimately ensure that family law case decisions are made in the best interest of families and the members have equitable outcomes.

Many of these women are in the situation where during the relationships in consultation with their partners have taken on the primary caretaker role and had to either accept an employment opportunities that supported this role or decided to remain out of the paid workforce for at least a significant period of the time.

SB1155
HB6688
HB6685

At the time of these decisions, it was perceived to be in the best interest of the family unit. Some of these women have worked outside the home, have graduate degrees, some of high school diplomas, other have made efforts to increase their educational attainment while working to raise families.

It is also my experience that when couple's begin their families, generally, they believe it will last; that both parties have many of the same values and beliefs and dreams for the future. However, when dissolutions occur, for whatever reason, there are shifts that happen that no one can predict. It is with these women in these situations in mind that I would respond to three bills before this committee SB 1155, HB 6688 and HB 6685.

Gratefully, we oppose 1155 and 6685 as currently written.

Specifically, the point I want to make is that, ultimately, we believe that the flexibility of the family law statutes is one of the strengths. We have seen women's role and opportunities involved, families and the definitions of families change over the past decades and these statutes have the flexibility that allow for these changes as attitudes and experiences have shifted.

We have seen an increase in the mediators and cases getting resolved by mediation prior to stepping into the courts, and we applaud this increase. While this is an important option, we also understand that mediation only works in specific situations under certain circumstances. These bills look to restrict this flexibility often in the name of

consistency, yet, it's not clear to us that consistency does not exist.

That leads me to the third bill, 6688, which we support. In particular, we support the study to be conducted by the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee. This year marks the 40th year of Connecticut's no-fault divorce laws. It is reasonable and desirable to do research and gather data to help inform the work. Good public policy is based on evidence not emotion.

However, we did want to -- make the -- make the point of modifying some of the language which requires the judge to share reasoning in all decisions not just those that appear to deviate from the presumptive standard. Doing so will improve transparency within the courts making the process more understandable and, thereby, benefiting the overwhelming number of family law cases where at least one party is representing themselves. We think that will add transparency.

And basically that's the conclusion of my remarks.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you.

Are there questions for Ms. Miller?

Seeing none, we appreciate your testimony.

AMY MILLER: Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: John Clapp.

JOHN CLAPP: Well, thank you all for -- for staying. Thank you, Senator Coleman and Representative Fox.

My name is John Clapp. I'm the chair of the Shared Parenting Council of Connecticut, we're a 501(c)(4) corporation, and we've been incorporated for ten years in the state. The mission of the Shared Parenting Council of Connecticut is to work for change in the legislative and judicial systems to improve outcomes for children in contested custody cases.

To this end, we have joined forces with the National Parents Organization to encourage shared parenting. I am in favor of HB 6685 because it promotes the importance of shared parenting. And I'm in favor of HB 1155 and HB 6688, have a limited understanding but my understanding is corrects some very sexist language that's currently existing in the statute.

In 2002, with the Governor's Commission on Divorce, Custody and Children recognized the importance of continuing involvement of both parents in a child's life. The commission identified the continuing involvement as one of the five critical challenges affecting the outcomes for children in the state of Connecticut. It reviewed the overwhelming evidence that children with an absent parent have lower grades, higher delinquency, higher school dropout rates and higher rates of incarceration.

As a result of the commission's recommendations in 2005, section 46b-56 of the Connecticut statutes now states that custody -- custody decisions should, quote, provide the child with

the active and consistent involvement of both parents commensurate with their abilities and interests, end quote.

However, this section of the statute still fosters litigation and conflict because of its ambiguous language. It's the opinion of the Shared Parenting Council that the law must insist on the critical and primary role of shared parenting. It must limit the notions and -- and legal conflict that currently disadvantages children. Unfortunately, as a current -- as the process is currently structured and too often results in the unnecessary elimination completely of fit parents from an active role in a child's life, this leads directly to the poor outcomes for children that I mentioned.

Even one case, like that of Jerry Mastrangelo or Tim Gelling, would be one too many but, unfortunately, you've heard many such cases today and there are many more over the ten years that I've been involved in this that I've heard about in the State of Connecticut. And very often, in these cases, children are caught between warring parents and their lawyers who are pursuing money and control through litigation.

So what I think we need is implementation of the current law and the recommendations of the 2002 commission rather than further study. We -- we need to figure out how to implement that. The costly and destructive litigation must be discouraged by the presumption of substantially equal parenting time. I'm in favor of HB 6685 because it makes a statement that we are in favor of substantially equal parenting time, and we discourage costly and ineffective litigation that is bad for the children.

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Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Clapp.

Are there questions? Any questions for Mr. Clapp?

Seeing none, thank you for your time and your testimony.

Gina Simko.

GINA SIMKO: Good afternoon. My name is Gina Simko, and I am from Hamden. I support the changes in Bill 1155 and 6688 and hope to see bill 6685 move forward regarding shared custody.

Reform in Connecticut family law and divorce is desperately needed. In the highly publicized parental alienation case that was in the New Haven Court House for the past two years, a dad had joint physical custody of his three children. Despite having this court order, the children's mother denied him access to his children for the past two and a half years. Since parental alienation takes hold of the entire family, the children have not seen their extended family for years. Their grandpa passed away being deprived of seeing his dear grandchildren. Their Noni only has pictures to remember their smiles. Cousins have not laughed or shared school and friend stories. Aunts and uncles have not been able to give hugs and kisses to those precious faces or celebrate birthdays and holidays with them.

I am an alienated aunt and Godmother to one of those children. The last time I saw my niece was in 2010 at my daughter's birthday party. The cousins ate, swam, hoopla-hooped, and

played volleyball on a beautiful warm day. They truly had fun. The memory is etched in my mind as the last party that we celebrated as a united family. I saw my nephews for a few minutes in 2012 when they visited my dad, as he was dying, that memory is also etched in my mind. The boys looked so scared and helpless. It was their dad that encouraged them to hug their grandfather as they whispered a timid, Hi, Grandpa.

If a shared custody law had existed in Connecticut, these children would not have been forced to choose between their parents after they divorced. They would have been involved with their extended family and the pain of knowing that a grandparent was so ill would have been eased by the continuous love that we all would have given to them.

I attended every court session for the past two years, and I witnessed firsthand how the court system is truly broken. The best interest of my nephews and niece was never realized and time was of no concern to any of the attorneys, the GAL or the judge.

Children deserve so much better than what I observed going on in the courtroom. How could anyone claim that taking a good parent out of his child's life is in their best interest. Instead of the attorneys and the GAL claiming to have the children's best interest, a law is needed to enforce what is actually in the children's best interest.

As the saying goes, actions do speak louder than words. And the family court rooms in Connecticut are certainly not representing this expression. Parental alienation is child abuse

and shared custody laws would prevent this abuse.

Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: We're doing well here.

Any questions for Ms. Simko?

Seeing none, thank you very much.

GINA SIMKO: Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Livia Barndollar.

LIVIA BARNDOLLAR: Good afternoon, Senator Coleman, other representatives and senators of the committee.

I'm one of the members of the lawyers working group as it has been described that created Bill 1155. The other members of that working group were Arthur Balbirer, Gaetano Ferro -- Gaetano Ferro being here today -- and retired Supreme Court Justice McLachlan, who was on both the working group for 1155 and the group that came up with the Bill 6688, which has been discussed a number of times today.

Our backgrounds and the wealth of knowledge that we all have is set out in Attorney Ferro's testimony, written testimony, just some indication because there have been references to the positions of various family law sections in Connecticut chapters of the academy and other institutional organizations. It is important to note, I think, that all four of us were former chairs and officers of the Family Law Section of the Connecticut Bar Association. Two of us were passed presidents of the National American Academy of Matrimonial

ABBY ANDERSON: Thank you.

REP. FOX: Kenneth Krajewski.

KENNETH KRAJEWSKI: Hello, I'm Kenneth Krajewski from Tolland, Connecticut. I am Antonio and Alexandria's dad, the two most important people in my life. I'd like to thank this Committee for raising this long overdue shared custody bill, 6685 as it will be four years this month that I have been alienated from my children and my children have been left fatherless.

As a result of an unqualified and negligent guardian ad litem, Mary T. Bergamini, shared parenting is ultimately the best interests of her children. I have spoken with some of you in the last few years one-on-one on some of these issues of negligent judges and guardian ad litem and unjust incarcerations of parents and veterans with disabilities which serves no purpose for the children's best interests.

The best interest is both fit parents. As a result of being exiled from my children and watching them go from love then pulling me apart every day excited to spend time with me to fish, to ride their quads, play sports and to see their extended family.

They were my life for 8 and 14 years prior. Watching them turn from love to hate has been extremely heartbreaking for me. To see my -- they have been manipulated, taught to fear everyone they once loved and have been psychologically kidnapped.

Psychological abuse in the form of parental alienation is child abuse. Because of this I founded Save Our Kids Parental Alienation Foundation in Connecticut and we're having our

fourth annual candle vigil at the Capitol on National Parental Alienation Awareness Day April 25th.

Shared parenting and many of the effects of this -- abuses can be stopped. Child abuse can be eliminated. Many of the parents that I've met as a parental rights advocate would not have had to be incarcerated or spend five, ten, twenty years back and forth in court just to see their children and losing everything they own.

Most parents that I've met just want to be involved more in their children's life, their children are doing in school, how their safety and well-being is I can relate to all their stories. I hear hundreds of them that didn't need to happen but they're happening in courts every day.

I fought for two years for a trial to present overwhelming evidence and police reports that my children were in harm's way. Because I was so passionate about my children and the truth, I knew or thought the appointed guardian ad litem would be too.

It was ultimately the guardian ad litem's job to see the evidence and report it which she never did. I was prepared to have her talk to 20 witnesses yet my ex had only one and that was a convicted felon. I exposed the guardian ad litem for around \$12,000 of falsified building -- billing. Then she tried to intimidate me with countless contempt charges for just trying to be with my children.

She solely turned me from a full-time dad to a visitor and a paycheck. Countless broken visitations -- am I able to continue?

REP. FOX: If you could just, you know, the -- the bell did go off. I mean I know you sat here all day so I'm trying to let you complete. If you could summarize that would be helpful.

KENNETH KRAJEWSKI: All right. It's just going to be -- it's just going to be a little bit more.

I reported these things to the guardian ad litem which she never reported to the courts. My son's first little league game she was told that my son was at his little league game and not in New York as my ex had told her but never reported that to the judge.

Another issue, Christmas day, my family brought a new quad to by children's house. The children's house was abandoned. The guardian ad nit -- ad litem knew where the children were and I had to go to Vernon police station to file a missing persons report and nothing was done.

These are the issues that parents have to deal with, especially non-custodial parents. It was just another ploy to keep control of my children and again the GAL never reported it.

Custodial parents try as hard as they can to be involved with their children and sometimes they go to school, they're treated like they're not the parents because the other parent has the power.

Guardian ad litem there has to be some kind of sanction and oversight review board on all the complaints as the abuses and parental interference is running wild in our courtrooms like cancer.

I'd really like to be part of the task force and give some more information to the Committee and help us where shared parenting, a lot of these issues will never happen and parents can be with their children at a closer rate of 40 to 50 percent.

REP. FOX: Well thank you. Thanks for your testimony today.

Are -- are there questions?

Senator Meyer.

KENNETH KRAJEWSKI: Yes, sir.

SENATOR MEYER: I'm -- I'm sorry what you've gone through. I'm not sure this bill will necessarily help you though. The crux of this bill, as I understand it, is that the court will -- there will be a presumption that the court will give shared custody if the parents agree that there should be shared custody.

It sounds to me in your situation there's been a lot of separation, a lot of alienation. It's nothing that -- that the mother of your children is ever going to agree to.

KENNETH KRAJEWSKI: Yes sir, but the -- but the point of the guardian ad litem having a full choice of taking a parent's side which -- which they're supposed to be neutral. Many times they're never neutral. They're where the money is.

SENATOR MEYER: I see okay. I just -- I just didn't want you to think that this bill is necessarily going to help you. It's going -- it's going in the direction of shared custody but --

KENNETH KRAJEWSKI: Yes.

SENATOR MEYER: -- but the presumption in favor of shared custody depends upon the two parents agreeing. You know it -- it says in line 17 there shall be a presumption that shared custody is in the best interest of minor child where the parties have agreed to an award of shared custody.

So if you're -- if you're really not getting along with your ex and your ex is alienated against you, it's -- it's not likely -- you know the -- that presump -- that presumption in favor of shared custody is not going to -- not going to arise.

KENNETH KRAJEWSKI: Yes there is -- there is cases of hostile parenting which -- which mine is very but most other issues of other parents from now on can have that chance and -- and they will have more -- more say of their parents instead of more interference from guardian ad litem.

And most times when parents run out of money you are held without seeing your children until you pay that bill which is wrong.

SENATOR MEYER: Okay, thank you.

KENNETH KRAJEWSKI: Thank you.

REP. FOX: Thank you.

Are there other questions?

Thanks for your testimony today.

Next is Frank Maturo.

That's like -- that's the -- that's the napkin they give you when you go into the restaurant.

I mean that's an easy one but there's other things that I think we can -- we can certainly improve upon.

REP. FOX: Thank you, Senator Meyer.

And thank you again, Mr. Maturo. It's a -- I know this is an issue you feel very strongly about and I also think -- I hope that having heard everybody here you understand how we hear from people who have a lot of experience in this issue who are on all sides of it but I do think awareness is being made and that people are coming together somewhat. I'm not sure they're going to completely get together but I think they are coming together somewhat and we're -- you know -- some -- there's more of a chance of doing something.

FRANK MATURO: Right and we appreciate you trying to make that happen. Thank you, Representative.

REP. FOX: Thank you, okay.

Jean-Pierre Bolat and after you is Lorri Cavaliere.

JEAN-PIERRE BOLAT: Mr. Chairman and esteemed members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to be here. I'm here in support of H.B. 6685 and I've come here today to testify about my experience in the family court system and more importantly the expensive toll that it takes on our families and especially our children.

By way in introduction I'm a retired naval officer and I've been -- I've had the honor of

serving my country and defending our Constitution for the last 24 years and I'm proud to be here today in front of you.

Like many of my colleagues here today, my children and I are victims of this corrupt system where lawyers, family relations bureaucrats and judges care more about clocking time against expensive retainers and maintain their political relationships than enforcing the rule of law and supporting the best interests of the children.

Since entering into the system in -- in May of 2010, I've lost over \$125,000 to lawyers and had to cash in my life savings to support my children. And because I wouldn't put my parents house on the street -- or put my parents out on the street and sell their house, I was rebuked by my attorney who already took \$80,000 of my money and he challenged me how committed are you to this.

When I refused to sell my parents house, he then conned me into appearing pro se one month prior to my trial because he didn't want to look bad in front of the judge for dropping me.

I'd like to now briefly talk about the GAL. Assigned by mutual agreement of both lawyers and the judge, he saw my children one time for approximately 15 minutes and has charged over \$20,000. Thinking that he was supposed to represent the best interests of my children, I emailed him dozens of times recounting incidents of alienation, emotional abuse and contempt.

You know the standard lines in every parenting plan which state the following and I quote from my parenting plan: the parents shall exert

every reasonable effort to maintain free access and unhampered contact between their children and each of the pair -- each of the parties to foster a feeling of affection between their children and the other party. Neither party shall do anything which may estrange their children from the other party nor injure the opinion of the children as to their mother or father nor act in any way as to hamper the free and natural development of their children's love and respect for the other party.

Rather than support me and the best interests of my children, the GAL repeatedly said to me what do you want me to do? And then when I finally took my wife -- my ex-wife to court for contempt last year, he remained silent when the judge asked him the last time he'd seen the children.

Yet he still billed me thousands and though the judge ruled in my favor, in favor of my motion on alienation, she failed to apply any sanctions or means to hold my ex-wife accountable and the bad behavior continues to this day.

So what's the toll on -- what's been the toll on my family? I'm now over \$250,000 in debt. My children and I have not taken a vacation in years. Hundreds of thousands of dollars I saved over the length of my career for my children is gone. All three children have been in and out of therapy. We are currently on our fifth therapist and until last month my daughter had not slept over my home for nearly a year and a half.

We've lost a lot of cuddling and father/daughter time. But my story is no different than hundreds or even thousands of

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others and I am extremely saddened to hear stories today of more children that are kept away from their parents. The largest toll is on the children.

Our children have an inalienable right to be loved by both parents and to love both parents. And except in cases of abuse and neglect, our government must do what it -- what it can to ensure our children's rights are maintained. Since the family court system has failed us, we must look to legislation to protect the rights of our children.

And this bill is a step in the right direction. The key, however, to any legislation is accountability and enforcement. I strongly urge this Body to support every child's right to love his or her parents and to have routine access and time with both parents and if either parent impedes upon that right, there must exist stringent, undisputable and enforceable consequences or sanctions. Without such enforceable sanctions this effort is naught and our children will continue to suffer.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you, sir.

Are there questions?

Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

You know I'm so happy that -- that finally somebody came up to the light and to expose this kind of problem. I know that -- like I said before earlier today I was involved like last year, maybe two years ago I started

getting involved in this issue and it was like my God like a -- like a wall there.

And we tried and -- and we met with -- with these females and -- and it was like they were so scared to come up publically and say something because they would say that -- they would -- all of them they were saying if we go out there, especially to the Legislature, we're going to have problems in court.

But -- but you know finally I think that this is -- this is good. For all those people to be going through so many problems and it was like nobody was listening.

And -- and even though that -- that I went and I knocked on doors and I talked to some people, they were saying we can't believe that this is going on. It was like impossible. Like they were saying no it can't be true because this is like a clique and it's -- everybody's involved. It's the GAL, it's the bastards, it -- it -- everybody's involved.

And it was so hard, you know, and -- and I'm say -- I was saying my God I can't believe that this is going on in our state.

But I'm so happy -- so happy for -- for you and for all of, you know, the ones that came here today and for the ones that have been dealing with even though -- that -- that it was a reporter that followed some of these cases for years, for two years, because in the beginning the -- the reporter didn't even believe that this was going on in the state. And finally after two years he proved that it was -- you know he got so many -- helped somebody prove it and he met with so many people that finally after two years he came up with a big article

in the paper and even though there was some people, you know, elected or whatever, they -- they didn't -- they didn't agree and -- and they didn't believe that this was going on.

But thank you, thank you very much for coming out today, thank you.

JEAN-PIERRE BOLAT: Thank you, Ma'am, and I thank Senator Fasano for his leadership and also Jerry Mastrangelo for making -- making this very known in the state.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you.

Are there other members with questions?

If not, thank you very much for your testimony.

JEAN-PIERRE BOLAT: Thank you very much.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Lorri Cavaliere.

LORRI CAVALIERE: Yes. Good evening.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Good evening.

LORRI CAVALIERE: I think it's evening. My name is Lorri Cavaliere and I am here to support Bills 1155, 6688 and 6685 on shared custody, parental alienation and the much needed GAL oversight.

I believe time is of the essence for reform. The minds and lives of children involved are at stake. I recently attended several court hearings to support my good friend in his long fight for the court-ordered right to see his children. He had a wonderful loving relationship with his three children up to and after his divorce. As part of his divorce, it

was stipulated that both parents share custody and a schedule was put in place, in writing.

Soon after, his ex-wife began making excuses for the children, making it difficult, often impossible, for my friend to share in the parenting. She said that the children didn't want to be with him and soon they were shunning him as if he were a stranger. What his ex-wife actually succeeded in doing was to make a mockery of the family court system proving that their custody agreement was simply a worthless piece of paper.

It was shown in testimony from medical expert witnesses that his ex-wife was not interested in following court orders regarding reunification therapy and it wasn't enforced. It was shown that while his ex-wife could insist that her children perform simple tasks such as bathing and brushing their teeth, she could not -- she would not/could not insist that they see their father.

The children resorted to demeaning their father on the phone and calling him names such as jerk, idiot, stupid, among others, with no admonishment whatsoever by their mother.

The GAL and the AMC involved certainly did not have the best interests of the children in mind. Their only concern voiced was that their bills were not being paid in a timely manner. There was no explanation for all the lost notes of meetings with the children, nor a demand for one from the judge, except for one one-hour session, despite this being a primary responsibility of the GAL.

In the end, the family court system lost sight of their charge. Whenever possible, children

should be given the benefit of the love and nurturing of both parents. If the courts do not care enough to hold a parent responsible for not following a written, signed custody agreement, why even bother? I sincerely believe the children were secretly hoping that the court would force them to reestablish a relationship with their dad.

If it happened that way, their mother couldn't be angry with them, and they could let go of the guilt that their mother was forcing them to bear.

At the end of the court hearing, it was clear that the whole thing was a sad farce. The only winners in the end were the attorneys and the GAL who left with much richer pockets as well as an ex-wife who laughed at the system and her defiance of it. How could this be allowed to happen?

After spending hundreds of thousands of dollars, an immeasurable amount of time and effort to reclaim his rightful role of father, my friend, a truly wonderful and loving man and father, left a beaten man. Even his own attorney convinced him to walk away, letting him believe that by dragging the case on, it would only cost him more money and in the end he would most assuredly lose his case.

The losers were his children, and the friends of the children who were closely watching. They took with them a scary lesson that it's okay to thumb your nose at the system because the system really doesn't care.

Yes, there needs to be more education for those entrusted with the well-being of our children

but there also needs to be oversight and checks and balances of the courts themselves.

Bill 6685 supports the oversight and penalties for any parent defying a court order or making false statements. I urge you to support this bill. It's the right thing to do for all our children.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you.

Are there questions?

Seeing no questions, we appreciate your testimony.

LORRI CAVALIERE: Okay.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Ann Smith.

ANN R. SMITH: Good evening, Senator Coleman --

SENATOR COLEMAN: Good evening.

ANN R. SMITH: -- and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Ann Smith. I'm the interim executive director of AFCAMP. I want to thank you for the opportunity to comment on proposed Bill No. 6682.

AFCAMP is a parent-driven nonprofit organization whose central mission is to educate, empower, and support parents of children with disabilities who reside primarily in the cities of Hartford and New Haven. On behalf of AFCAMP parents and youth, I am here today to speak in support of this proposed legislation to require school districts choosing to place police officers in their school to adopt formal policies or Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) with their local police

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Are there questions for Ms. Smith?

I don't see any questions but as an aside coincidentally yesterday I was going through some papers in my office, of which there are quite a few, but I had a chance to re-read my last correspondence with Mirva Jackson and I know how important she was to your organization and I think we both agree it is quite a void to be filled with her passing.

ANN R. SMITH: Thank you, thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: So I want to make that comment and congratulate you for the work that you do and keep up the -- the good job and thank you for your time today.

ANN R. SMITH: I appreciate that sentiment, thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Um-hum.

ANN R. SMITH: Thank you to the Committee.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Louis Keifer is next.

LOUIS KEIFER: Senator Coleman, Representatives, my name is Louis Keifer. I'm a family law attorney working out of Hartford. First of all Senator Meyer pointed out one of the -- I'm in support of the shared parenting bill but not as drafted.

I think that the presumption should be shared parenting whether or not the parties agree to it. That's a major defect in the - in the bill as I see it.

Now according to the National Vital Statistics Report for the year 2012, the number of births,

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by race and Hispanic origin in Connecticut, were as follows: white 23 percent to single mothers; Hispanic 65 percent; blacks 69 percent. Who are -- who will take care -- who will father those children?

Well we know that the abusive boyfriend that lives with mom might be one of the -- the father figures. We know that the state, through its welfare, may take over supporting those children. We know that the Juvenile Court System, the -- DCF, eventually the prison system and eventually the mental health community will be providing for the services for these people who were not raised with a father in an intact family.

That's tragic and I don't know what the solution is. But what's even more tragic and when you have fine fathers who want to be involved in their children's lives who are prevented because of the court system from playing a role and providing a role model for these children.

You've heard some of these fathers, eloquent, established, hard working and yet they are being deprived. Now the system is broken and I -- Representative Gonzalez, this is from one of your constituents. It was an email that he received.

The plaintiff said that she can do anything she wants and the courts and social workers will believe her. Number two men have no rights. Number three the plaintiff will only see the children when she permits it and only when she feels like it. Number four there is nothing that a blank hole judge or social worker can do and number five I can ask for more child support and screw you some more.

That wasn't by a man who feels that he has been disengaged from the system. That is from a woman that knows the system is rigged in her favor and that is unconscionable.

Now let's talk about what some of the problems are because they're all interrelated. First of all the pursuit of perfection denies adequate fathers the right to access of their children. Now what do we mean by that? It means that because we want quote the best interest as if there's a gold standard; that of the two parents one is superior we can exclude the other parent.

So that is the -- the number one problem is that the best interest standard is not a standard that permits both parents to operate. That is why we need shared parenting.

Number two, in order to find who is the best parent we have to go through all the -- the tests. Let's have a guardian ad litem. We don't care that the father can't afford his own lawyer but we'll make him pay a -- probably 50 percent of a guardian's fee just because we want the best interests of the children protected.

And maybe there's a problem. Well let's hire a psychologist or a psychiatrist to investigate further, more money being shuffled in -- down the drain.

So my time is up but I did -- just want to point out that three states have a -- require, Alaska, Massachusetts and Oklahoma, the presumption of shared parenting shall apply to pendente lite orders and then if you want the court to look at quote the best interests fine.

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But I think that is a -- a step in the right direction.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you.

Are there questions?

Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

You know, sir, I -- I do agree with a lot of things that you just said and I would like honestly to verify that that's from one of my constituents. I would like to see that and I would like -- I would like to be sure that that's from one of my constituents female in my district, that's one.

And second when you said for these people that are being raised -- being raised without a father. For these people those are kids, sir, and I think that the way you say it, I didn't like it for these people. Those are kids, sir.

LOUIS KEIFER: I know it.

REP. GONZALEZ: Okay but -- but that -- then next time around you should first think (inaudible) say those are kids. For these people it sounds like really bad. I didn't like it and -- and not that I don't agree with you in a lot of things because I know that this problem being -- being -- I've been dealing with this for -- for years now and it's not that I don't -- I don't disagree with you because I agree with you. I -- I disagree with you the -- the way that you express yourself for these people.

And also I would like to be sure that that letter is from one of my constituents if you don't mind.

LOUIS KEIFER: I will -- I will with your permission write his name on a piece of paper and hand it to you.

REP. GONZALEZ: Oh yes and the address because from my district -- I -- I represent one district in Hartford. I don't represent the whole -- the whole city. But still even if it is from one of my people, I would like to see it.

LOUIS KEIFER: I -- I think if you see the name you'll recognize it.

REP. GONZALEZ: Yes.

LOUIS KEIFER: All right and -- and I -- I know made -- I've made no intentional offense.

REP. GONZALEZ: Okay.

LOUIS KEIFER: I just want these children, no matter who they are, to be raised with access to both parents. I think (inaudible).

REP. GONZALEZ: And we know, sir, that Hispanics and African-Americans some of our kids are not raised by the father. I know that but it's a little bit hard sometimes and we know that. I don't think that nobody has to rub that in our face here. That's -- that's the other thing.

But I agree with you again I will say because we know that it's a problem and we have to resolve that and I think that we should get involved because for years I've been trying to see if we can get some help for this issue and I know that you're right.

The kids they have the -- the right -- you're right they -- the kids have the right to -- you know to spend time with both the mother and the father, I know that.

LOUIS KEIFER: Yes and we know that even though they are single mothers, they're living with the fathers and -- and you know I don't have those statistics but the -- un -- unfortunately we -- we really have to address this issue of having children, whether their parents are married or not, to have access to their parents.

REP. GONZALEZ: And also I would like to add to that that we have a lot of kids out there and a lot of -- a lot of parents, African-Americans and Latino like you said, that we raised the kids by ourself and some of us were lucky that maybe the kids don't end up in jail or whatever. But some of us that we have to go through hell raising our kids but it's not our fault. It's not the mother that is raising the kids by themselves. It is not their fault. You know the -- so --

LOUIS KEIFER: And -- and that's why I -- I pointed out that where are the fathers involved and how can we get them involved on many of these -- these births?

REP. GONZALEZ: Yeah because you know what we have in -- in all communities we have the same. It's not a difference between one community -- the other -- the -- the only difference is between the African-Americans and Latinos and maybe the Anglos is resources, is resources.

That's a lot -- there's a big difference in our community because we have also kids they're being raised by non-Latinos and not African-

Americans and they end up in jail. So you know we have problems like in all communities.

LOUIS KEIFER: Sure.

REP. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

LOUIS KEIFER: Okay.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there others with questions?

Seeing none, I want to make -- maybe I have a question for you but probably a comment but I would like your response because I agree with so much of what you've said including the statement that the system is rigged in favor of the -- the female and the mothers. I think that's an unfortunate fact that I also observe.

What I can envision is at least in respect to the motions for joint custody, the judges will say that joint custody relies upon a certain amount of cooperation between the parents and where that cooperation doesn't exist they have no choice but to award custody to one parent or the other.

And I can see a similar argument being made against an initiative for shared parenting or shared custody. What would your response be to that argument?

LOUIS KEIFER: My response is that if the court defines the time that the children are with each parent, that there are very few arguments as to the other decisions that are usually made. In other words if the -- the school says okay the child is going to live let's say in -- in Bloomfield, then the child will go to the Bloomfield school. That's already been decided.

If they say that on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and every other weekend they'll be with partner -- or -- with parent A, then that -- that's all right and we don't have to decide. But the fact is that once you have parity, then it makes it easier to negotiate what is best for the children because it's in both of your interests.

In other words it might not be your day but you want to switch days you've got days to switch. And I think, if anything, it -- it encourages cooperation if there is a parity. Where you have now in which one party has all the power, for example in joint custody, it's supposed to be equal decision-making.

But the courts are very often saying but the final decision-making will be with mom and when that happens mom doesn't even have to ask dad. She's got all the power so dad has no negotiating power to say well what about this or what about that. You know what about a tattoo, I -- I don't want her -- my daughter to get a tattoo. Doesn't matter, you heard the judge I've got ultimate des -- res -- decision-making.

So I think that this encourages it rather than discourages it.

SENATOR COLEMAN: And -- and I agree with so much of what you said. I've experienced a considerable amount of frustration in a case that I've handled where mom has been involved in actual perjured testimony in dictating that dad was responsible for daycare expenses that didn't even exist because she was a part of the Care 4 Kids program. Forged court orders where she actually removed the body of a court order and put in her own words suggest -- not suggesting

but actually indicating that dad's access should be limited not -- well completely eliminated at the daycare center where the child -- the child was so that dad would not have any information or access to the child.

Judges knew this, guardian ad litem knew this. Nobody has done anything about it despite initiatives on the part of dad in order to get someone to respond to these. There's been virtually no sanction or punishment that's been imposed -- imposed against mom for perjury or forgery and various other bad acts.

I guess my frustration has been with what I just indicated to you as a response from the judge. At a certain juncture the judge indicates that if the parties demonstrate that they cannot get along, then he'll have no other option but to award sole custody presumably to the mom I'm sure he's thinking.

With the behavior that was already demonstrated by mom, that was just an open-ended invitation for her to continue not getting along or not cooperating with dad so that at some juncture the judge would step in and say you guys aren't getting along so I'm going to have to make this decision.

And my added frustration is that there is so much attention given, particularly to minority dads, suggesting that they're not interested in being a part of the lives of their children and this is the situation that I know first-hand where dad wants very badly to be a part of the child's life and it's mom who is thwarting that effort.

But the system doesn't even pause to recognize that. You would think that the system, for as

much as it's been critical of minority dads who maybe have not been as involved as they should be where one is attempting to do that, you would think that there would be some support from the system in order to accomplish that and I found nothing unfortunately to commend the system for in this particular case.

LOUIS KEIFER: That has been my experience. As a matter of fact in my prepared remarks I was going to say that the worst difficulty is representing a person who is innocent but has been falsely accused of either domestic violence or sexual abuse. The second worst client to do a good job for is the single black parent, the father that wants to have contact with his infant and the judge usually responds by saying sir what do you know about infants as if every hospital grills the mother before they release the child home to see what she knows about infants.

Then they say well what about -- do you -- is there a female in your house as if men are incapable of taking care of babies. And then the third question is what kind of facilities do you have for a baby? And then the fourth thing is well we better appoint a guardian ad litem to go look at your premises and make sure it's good enough for a -- a six month old child and that is rampant you're absolutely right.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there any other members?

Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ: Thank you for the second time.

I have another comment here. And -- and I would like to say that it's not only the judge's goal or the guardian ad litem's goal

just against, you know, the father. I know there are a lot of cases out there against the father but we -- I also saw a lot of cases two years ago and last year against the mother.

So this is something that is not against just the fathers. This is dependent of wherever the judge decides or -- or the guard -- the guardian ad litem to go.

If they decide to go and protect or -- or go and -- and go with the mother than the father is going to be paying the price and if that -- if they go against the -- the opposite than the other person is going to end up paying the price.

So this is a huge problem that we have. One way or the other, going against the father, going against the mother, this is a huge problem and -- and I would like to say that this problem -- somebody brought up this problem a couple of years ago and it was like nobody wanted to believe that this was going on. People didn't believe that this was serious and it was happening.

So that's why I'm saying that I'm happy that you guys came in and brought this issue because this issue was discussed here a couple of years ago.

LOUIS KEIFER: Um-hum.

REP. GONZALEZ: And -- and I hope that this time around we can do something about it.

LOUIS KEIFER: I hope you can too. Thank you.

REP. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

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April 5, 2013
10:00 A.M.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Jennifer Verraneault.

JENNIFER VERRANEAULT: Hello, good evening.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Good evening.

JENNIFER VERRANEAULT: I'm Jennifer Verraneault. I live in East Haven and I'm actually a certified guardian ad litem not that I wanted to make that my career, because I have a career, but I wanted to learn what the roles and the responsibilities were of a guardian ad litem because I witnessed some unbelievable behavior by a guardian ad litem in the New Haven court system.

HB 6685
HB 6688
SB 1155

So I took the class in 2011 and I loved it. By the time I finished my trainer -- both trainers said you need to go to law school, you need to (inaudible) and I said wait a second why do I have to be a lawyer to be a guardian ad litem?

Well because nine -- about 95 percent of them are lawyers. So the first day I'm in class, there's 200 people at Quinnipiac getting certified, and the computer is up, playing Black Jack or playing cards, answering emails, all these things because I could see them all. Not everybody but a lot.

So one of the trainers, after Judge Monroe asked does anybody know the difference between an AMC and a guardian ad litem? No one had the answer and these are the very people that have been protecting the best interests of our children in the State of Connec -- Connecticut for I don't know how long okay?

I knew what the answer was because I studied and he said, and I think his name was Steve Dembo or something, really he -- he said -- he

was really upset and he said did anybody read the -- the homework assignment that we had? Obviously nobody did. So anyway that's how the class started.

Then I -- as I learned more of what the responsibilities were, you know, I was like gosh, you know, I can't believe that someone dear to my heart with three beautiful children that I've been involved with for the last six years has a guardian ad litem that has not done her job.

And I know that this bill is about shared parenting but the thing is is that if we don't get the guardian ad litem under control, nothing is going to work because the person that has this guardian ad litem was told by four attorneys you will never get a guardian ad litem thrown off your case so don't even try it, okay?

This is what they gave us one of the first days. It's the only motion that a guardian ad litem can file with the court and it says, just one area, I pre -- I represent to the court that this is an urgent matter affecting the children either regarding the safety of the children or regarding compliance with existing court orders. I sat here all day and I heard a lot of people talk about they have guardian ad litem and they also contempt mod -- contempt issues with one parent. Why is this not being filled out? I don't know.

I actually contacted the guardian ad litem in the middle of taking the course that was on this case in our family. I called her. I got her bill. It's a \$20 bill for returning my phone call, not her, her secretary, to ask me

what did I want to talk to this guardian ad litem about.

I said you know I really would like to just talk to her about my perception with the children and their father. I have been involved in their lives for the last five years and I know that they love their father and I -- I have a different perspective that I can share.

Judge Monroe said in the training in -- in a Family Commission meeting that I attended about four of them which I don't blame the Commission. I don't really blame the judges. I really put a lot of the blame on the guardian ad litem because I have to believe that when I sat through the Commission meetings, the Family Commission, everyone that's on it they were trying to figure out how to fix this problem. For two years they've had it on their agenda about guardian ad litem and what their role is and how people don't know what they are.

Okay so this guardian ad litem is supposed -- and every guardian ad litem, as Judge Monroe said in -- in the meeting, at the Commission meeting and at the GAL training, their job is to investigate and report back to the court, to the judge, on what their findings are.

I don't know why a guardian ad litem needs to charge \$300 for being an investigator, okay? It's only preventing parents their due process because they can't afford to fight -- I'm sorry the -- the bell.

But can I just say a couple of more things about this guardian ad litem because it's not just our story. We set up a Facebook page, a website, we've had bill boards on the highway

throughout Connecticut. We -- we've been on radio shows. We've been on the TV. We've had a lot of exposure to our case. We've had people come out of the woodwork who have already walked away as you've heard some people here.

They've given up their parental rights because they emotionally and physically cannot handle the fight and why should you have to choose. Do I spend \$250,000 to get a chance of seeing my child and having the -- everybody, you know, enforce these court issues -- court -- court orders or do I walk away?

Parents are walking away. They can't help it, okay? So this guardian ad litem never called me back but I got a \$20 bill, my significant other saying that they called. We're in court six months later, I went up to the guardian ad litem I said, I don't want to say her name, I said well I don't understand why didn't you call me? Why didn't you want to talk to me because the -- the role of a guardian ad litem, I can say very confidently because I got my certification, is to investigate and report back to the court.

Why would you not want to talk to someone who is around these children 95 percent of the time when they're with their father who has 40 percent custody of these children. She goes Jennifer I called you, I have a witness, the reunification therapist was standing there. I go no you didn't, she goes yes I did.

She said to me four times she called me and I -
- I would not back down. I said no you didn't. She goes well I thought I did and she walked away.

Guess what after I put it on, you know, our Facebook page and exposed her, we're in court last -- a couple of weeks ago, she said to me oh no I'm mistaken I didn't call you back my secretary called you back. I go that's what I told you, because I told her that, your secretary.

So then she says to me -- I said okay so let's say your secretary did call me back because I told you she did, why didn't you want to talk to me or meet with me? Because I didn't think it was relevant. How is that -- how is she -- and she has immunity. You cannot go after someone. How are they not doing a job? It's clearly stated what their job description is. So how do they get immunity, no liability, no accountability but yet they get \$300 an hour and if you don't pay it, I learned in the training, they'll -- they'll lean -- put a lien on your house. They'll put you in jail.

Here's her bill, \$50,000, and the AMC gets what \$40,000 and he still doesn't have his kids. They beat him up for nine hours on March -- on March 18th in New Haven on the third floor. At quarter to five he said I've done all of this, I'm not walking away from my children. His attorney said, you know what, you're going to be spending another quarter of a million dollars and you're not going to be anywhere near where you want to be.

His eyes were red. This is a man who is a smart businessman. He doesn't make impulse decisions. He's a good man. His eyes were red. He was emotionally drained. Quarter to five he goes in front of Judge Gould and he says I'm not signing this.

Have you ever heard of a judge allowing someone to go into his chambers and even use his bathroom, okay? This is what the tactics are in New Haven. It was quarter to five. He said I'm not signing it. I want a motion for continuance. He was bullied for another hour in the Judge's chamber. As a matter of fact all of us were in the court waiting for him to leave. We knew that they were emotionally bullying him to get this -- get this signed.

And guess what ended up happening, he didn't even read it. He was so upset he just wanted to get out of there. He signed away everything. They didn't want him to even walk through courtroom before he signed it to go the bathroom. They said you know what you don't want to go out there you're family is out there. Use the Judge's bathroom.

This is what's going on in New Haven, Connecticut and I know everyone -- you -- you've never been there and when I first got involved with this I was like oh my God this -- this can't be happening, this is crazy. When we get calls and emails from people that tell us their story, I can't help but think what did they do? What did they do that their kids don't want to see them, the AMC doesn't like him, the -- the GAL doesn't -- whatever.

But really it's a problem and -- okay I'm sorry I'm going on and on but there really is problem, really a problem.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there questions?

Senator Kissel and then Representative Gonzalez.

SENATOR KISSEL: I just want to say thank you and I apologize I have to leave early but I will be in touch with the other leaders of the Committee regarding other folks testimony but -

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: Okay.

SENATOR KISSEL: -- it's very important that you're here telling us because, you know, I'm thinking should I go and sit in this courtroom for a day and not let anybody know and just hang out in the back and see what's going on.

And I'm going to tell you that probably 16 years ago or thereabouts I was instrumental in getting guardian ad litem in Connecticut.

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: Um-hum.

SENATOR KISSEL: It seemed like a really good idea to get someone out there to protect the interests of the child and I think for a long time it seemed to work without a problem. What I'm sort of picking up here today and it seems to be geographically based a little bit. But also it's been a difficult economy, a difficult economy on attorneys.

And if all of a sudden you now have this gig where if you get appointed it's 300 bucks an hour and I know people in private practice and, you know, you're lucky if get \$400 for a real estate closing and those just aren't happening like they were five years ago.

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: Um-hum.

SENATOR KISSEL: Have we inadvertently created a cottage industry for some folks that are completely protected from any kind of

responsibilities? So I think the study of that whole situation that's before us today, I think after a period of time we do have to circle back, benchmark, find out if things are working out appropriately and -- and just hearing what you said, I think that that was really important because you went and you were certified.

You are as close to an objective observer. I know that you're involved in a case.

JENNIFER VERRANEULT: Um-hum.

SENATOR KISSEL: But it's not like you're just involved in a case and you're just talking from what you saw --

JENNIFER VERRANEULT: Um-hum.

SENATOR KISSEL: -- the fact that you took the time to take the training and so that you know what's supposed to be going on --

JENNIFER VERRANEULT: Um-hum.

SENATOR KISSEL: -- is sort of like an undercover agent.

JENNIFER VERRANEULT: Yeah.

SENATOR KISSEL: And so that's very helpful because --

JENNIFER VERRANEULT: Thank you.

SENATOR KISSEL: -- that's -- we're here in Hartford. We -- we do have a -- we have tried to go out into the community to have public hearings but unless you folks take the time -- it's a participatory government --

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: Um-hum.

SENATOR KISSEL: -- we can't be everywhere all at once.

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: Right.

SENATOR KISSEL: And so your testimony is very, very valuable and I appreciate you taking the time.

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: Thank you kindly. One comment before you leave?

SENATOR KISSEL: It's up to the Chairs.

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: When I was listening -- oh can I or no?

SENATOR KISSEL: It's up -- I'm -- I'm fine. I'm not leaving until you actually leave and then I have to go.

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: Okay. When I was listening to the bill regarding the custody and the guardianship of the animals, which I'm a big animal lover, I said well why -- this is an opportunity for the GALs that if they get slapped around for what they're doing they could just move right over to the -- the custody and the welfare of dogs, you know, because I'm sure they can figure that out.

Anyway I'm sorry.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

How long is the training, for how long?

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JENNIFER VERRANEULT: It's 30 hours and it's six days.

REP. GONZALEZ: Thirty hours.

JENNIFER VERRANEULT: Thirty hours so you go -- it starts like at 12:00 and you leave by 5:00; it's six days.

REP. GONZALEZ: For six days.

JENNIFER VERRANEULT: Yes.

REP. GONZALEZ: And anybody -- anybody can take it.

JENNIFER VERRANEULT: Anyone.

REP. GONZALEZ: Anyone. Like -- like Senator Kissel was saying that -- that he was very instrumental with the GAL and I would like to say he's leaving but I would like to say before he leaves that things change.

JENNIFER VERRANEULT: Right, right.

REP. GONZALEZ: Things change. You know they started a process.

SENATOR KISSEL: (Inaudible).

REP. GONZALEZ: Maybe you -- maybe you started -- maybe you started the process, maybe he (inaudible) process --

JENNIFER VERRANEULT: Right.

REP. GONZALEZ: -- but that doesn't mean, Senator Kissel, that it's still like that. So may -- thank you for what you did and I know that you -- you have, you know, good intentions and you want to help but like I said -- like I said

before, you know, you can start something with, you know, with the good intention but then people get in and because the money people get corrupted and they will do whatever they want to do.

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: Um-hum.

REP. GONZALEZ: And -- and that -- that happens, you know that that happens and -- and in court, you know, when I was -- when I was growing up in Puerto Rico when -- when you mentioned a judge in my community when I was growing up, there was the biggest thing, you know, a lot of respect. You never talked to them, not even look, you know, at -- at a judge because he was a lot of respect.

And now I'm saying we have the good and we've got the bad that's always and not only in New Haven. You can go to every single court and you have the good ones and you have the bad ones. You have the ones that really care and you've got the ones that they really don't care because I don't want to say something else.

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: Right.

REP. GONZALEZ: Now that happens and that's why it's good that you guys came out, you know, and -- and hopefully, you know, we're going to be able to do -- do something about it. Now what really worries me is that all the complaints out there about -- about the parents, mothers and fathers, there was a -- they -- we can't complain to the judge. And then we can complain to the judge and then they also (inaudible) the agency, they're going to supervise the visit and they also charge a lot of money.

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: Yup.

REP. GONZALEZ: So when you -- and (inaudible) sometimes, you know, you come -- you wake up and say hey what's going on, between the agency and the -- and the GAL you're flat broke and then you can't fight for your kids. And -- and I know this is serious, I know this is serious and that's why I want to get involved, I really want to get involved because I don't -- I think that it's time to do something about it.

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: Yeah and I don't think the task force should include anyone from the judicial --

REP. GONZALEZ: Listen I --

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: -- okay because the very person, and I'm sorry but one person who's part of the big thing said to someone that I was with in my training business is slow, take the class, I'll send you some cases, okay? So it's happening.

REP. GONZALEZ: I'm going to take the classes but I (inaudible) the classes.

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: You get \$300 an hour.

REP. GONZALEZ: It will be interesting, it will be interesting but -- but -- right. So -- but I'm going to look into that because I know that when they were saying before, you know, the task force, I agree that I -- I don't think that we should have, I'm sorry, any judges running -- running the task force. I agree with you, thank you.

JENNIFER VERRANEALT: Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there others with questions?

Representative Albis.

REP. ALBIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Jennifer, so much for coming up to -
- from East Haven today to testify. I -- I
just want to echo Senator Kissel's comments.
It's incredibly valuable for us to hear your
perspective, your unique experiences. It -- it
will be helpful as --as we consider these
issues down the line and I -- I thank you for
your advocacy and, you know, I -- I don't have
a question but I just wanted to -- to make that
comment and thank you.

JENNIFER VERRANEULT: Thank you very much.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there others with questions or
comments?

If not, thank you very much for your input here
today.

JENNIFER VERRANEULT: Okay, thank you very much for
staying so late.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Mike Krukiel.

MIKE KRUKIEL: Good evening, I'm Mike Krukiel from
Cromwell, Connecticut and I'm here to support
Bill 6685. How do you summarize in three
minutes 40 years and four generations of
parental alienation due to current law and the
failures of the family court system in
Connecticut?

I'm speaking on behalf of my grandparents, my
father, myself, my two sons and my daughter.
It began in 1973 when my parents divorced and

were one of the first cases under Connecticut's new No-Fault Divorce law.

It began by bi-weekly visitation that I had with my father and that's when he became a visitor and soon he would become a stranger. My mother began to deny visits, denigrate my father and alienate me from him.

I was taught to distance myself from my father and to hate him. By the age of twelve I would never see my father again - ever! My father would eventually commit suicide by putting a shotgun to his head and pulling the trigger.

I never saw my grandmother again and I did not see my grandfather until 1996. I grew up lost, alone and without direction. I failed at school. I made extremely poor decisions that would affect me the rest of my life including who I would choose to marry.

It is impossible to describe to you what the absence of a father did to me due to family law in the 1970's. It is not that much different today. I'm a child of parental alienation.

As an adult I had two marriages, two divorces, two custody battles in the State of Connecticut, AMC, two GALs, countless medical professionals, psychiatrists, psychologists, attorneys and so on and two sons and a daughter and they no longer have a father because of current law.

The first case resulted in a 15 year custodial battle for my two sons just to be an equal parent in the lives -- an equal parent in their lives with equal rights and equal responsibilities. I was married in 1990, had two son -- a son born in 1993 and another in

1994. I was served -- sever -- served divorce papers in January of 1995 and ordered out of the house.

I was denied my sons from the beginning. Their mother was relentless in countless attempts to take my sons away and alienate me. Three Family Relations Custodial Evaluations in the 1990's alone. Attempts to take my sons to England, Virginia and California. I was that father deemed no longer capable of caring for my six-month old and denied overnights because I was no longer in the house.

Dr. James Black -- after exhausting the family relations system in Middletown, Dr. James Black was named evaluator in 2000 and his first evaluation was complete in 2002. At the regional level there was a trial in 2003. I was forced to agree to less than 50/50 another -- essentially it was a 70/30 split and apparently eight years of abuse and -- towards my two sons was not enough for -- to even be an equal parent in their lives.

Alienation continued and it became so severe that for 17 months, from April of 2005 until October of 2006, I am denied my sons completely. At a second trial at the regional level, which began in October of 2006 and lasted for a full week, Judge Bozzuto enforces the existing orders of 2003.

My ex was found to be delusional, prone to distort reality and testifies on the stand at regional that she secretly wished I was dead. Judge Bozzuto, in January of 2007, awards me sole legal custody and physical residency of my two sons based on a severe state of alienation. It took 12 years and their complete destruction for that to happen.

I was ordered to move from Cromwell to Wethersfield as part of an award -- of -- of that award and forced to let go of my home and file for bankruptcy for the second time in ten years.

Judge Bozzuto made one grave mistake. She got it though, she got what the alienation was about and she made the decision at the time that she should have made. But she made one grave mistake and this is critical. She did not put in place any orders to contain my ex. Once the new orders were put in place, everyone walked away and my ex continued her campaign to alienate and influence my sons for the next three years that they lived with me.

There were no sanctions put in place, no consequences for her to stop and no one was watching.

In 2006, GAL Emily Moskowitz was assigned to the case. At the conclusion of the trial and the new orders were put in place, she provided her phone number to my sons for them to call her at anytime they had a complaint against me, which they did constantly at their mothers urging for the next three years.

In April of 2010 GAL Moskowitz allowed their mother to bring my sons to her for a meeting without my knowledge despite me having sole legal custody at the time. Essentially this was the woman who says she wished I was dead and had alienated them for so long and had custody stripped of her and this should never ever have happened. I was not made aware of this meeting until I was served new motions by the -- by a marshal informing me that my sons had met with the GAL behind my back.

This is what they had been exposed to for so long and could now -- no longer -- they relented to what their mother's pressure was.

Returning to court, GAL Moskowitz aligns herself with my ex, shuts me out and my sons return back to their mother. After 15 years, I could no longer fight anymore and I cannot fight a biased GAL all alone. I had no more money.

This was October 2010. I have not seen my oldest son since. His life has been destroyed. It was two years before I saw my younger son and I've only seen him a few times since. His life has also been destroyed.

I have a second case, a second marriage, second divorce. Married in 1996 and a daughter that was born in 1997. What made this case unique is that we had lived separately since 2004 all the way up until 2010 without court orders. We had a 50/50 Parenting Plan that we agreed upon.

And our daughter, despite a lot of difficulties, had a -- was an emotionally healthy, happy, well adjusted child that had a great relationship with both of her parents until 2010 began.

Her mother began an affair and told my then 13 year old daughter to keep her affair a secret from me. Her mother then ran to attorneys, filed motions and attack, attack, attack!

She put my daughter in the middle, lied to her, alienated her from me and forced her to choose between her parents by filing a motion for a GAL because she knows, like was previously stated, that the -- the courts are on her side

as mother and because the system enables and encourages her to do so.

GAL Rhonda Morra was named GAL for my daughter and from the beginning she chose sides before meeting my daughter before -- or for meeting her mother and she shut me out. She refused to even hear the history of this case from the beginning and she aligned herself with her mother.

GAL Morra has no children. She cannot relate, is incredibly biased and incompetent and to this day knows nothing of the history of this case and refuses to hear it. She made the statement that I know enough when I tried to speak up and tell her the history. She still has not heard my side.

GAL Morra made assurance statement to her mother, my ex, to not to worry after I left the room at a Family Relations Mediation Session because I did not agree to a 70/30 agreement. I only know that this was said because I paused outside the door when I left.

GAL Morra should never have inserted herself in a family relations mediation session and tried to strong arm me into -- into agreeing to a 70/30 split after six years of a 50/50 parenting plan. We never had a chance to mediate.

Your system is designed to pit one parent against the other. It uses the child as a pawn and I was that pawn when I was a child. All of my children have been put in the middle of this system and destroyed.

It's whoever gets possession of the child is the one who gets residency and gets child

support and all the decision-making because joint legal custody does not mean a thing. It's possession.

You have -- you -- for -- there has to be consequences. I know my time is up and you guys -- all right.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there questions for Mr. Krukiel?

Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ: Thank you for coming today. How old are your kids?

MIKE KRUKIEL: My oldest son now will be 20 next month and my younger son is 18 and my daughter is 15.

REP. GONZALEZ: So you're still with you daughter three more years.

MIKE KRUKIEL: I have not seen my daughter for the last nine months now. I have not seen my oldest son in two and one half years for the second time and I have a very strained relationship with my younger son after not seeing him for two years.

REP. GONZALEZ: You know I would like to say that -- and I'm not -- I don't know if I'm doing the right thing or not but I'm going to say it anyway because honestly this really bothers me. It is a group of -- of parents, you have females and males, they're -- they really organize themselves because of this problem.

And -- and because sometimes the court orders not to say anything, that's what a gag order, sometimes they don't -- they don't have nowhere

to go. But I will say, and I will say it here and I don't care, whatever, but I will say get in touch with that group because that group already went to the federal court and they are doing something against all -- all of this as who's going on.

MIKE KRUKIEL: I've been speaking out about this since the 1990s when I was in the courts passing out info on parental alienation at that time.

REP. GONZALEZ: Well go to -- go to the website. Go to -- I think there is a group, I heard that it's a group, that they -- they are working on this because they know that they couldn't go back to court, the judges they were not listening and what I heard is that they got -- they already went to the federal court. So I think it -- it will be interesting for you to find out, you know, and -- and check and maybe we can get together with them and -- and help them because I think that they need all the help that, you know, they can get.

MIKE KRUKIEL: Yes that's part of why I'm here today. You know my fight for my son -- sons is over, there's nothing more that I can do and I hope someday they understand and figure it out.

I'm at a crossroads at what I should do about my daughter because of her and where she is and it's very complicated. But I will say this if you do not change this shared parenting law, then I pray to God that my children do not have children because I would never ever want to see them end up in one of your family courts and face the same thing over again. Please do not let this happen to a fifth generation of Krukiels.

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REP. GONZALEZ: Do you know what is good about this is that everybody was quiet because they were scared and -- and what is good about this is is that people are waking up and saying it's -- it's a light, you know, at the end of the tunnel and they are looking for that light and I think that you can be part of that group.

MIKE KRUKIEL: Thanks, thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there others with questions?

Seeing none, thank you, Mr. Krukiel.

MIKE KRUKIEL: Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Marisa Halm.

MARISA HALM: Good evening, Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Marisa Halm. I'm an attorney with the Center for Children's Advocacy and I'm here today to support Raised Bill 6682, AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL.

Our organization has been instrumental in promoting this legislation for the past couple of years so if there's any questions I can answer I'm happy to do that. I know that you've heard a lot of testimony in support of this bill from my colleagues and our other supporters so I'm going to try not to repeat a lot of information.

Just a little background on our organization. We're a nonprofit legal services organization. We're the only organization that serves -- is dedicated to serving children in the State of Connecticut.

Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

MARISA HALM: Okay, thank you very much.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Dr. Richard Kisiel.

Raphael Podolsky.

RAPHAEL L. PODOLSKY: Thank you, Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, members of the Committee. My name is Raphael Podolsky. I'm with the Legal Assistance Resource Center. It's part of the legal aid programs. I'm going to try and be very brief here.

In summary we are in support of House Bill 6682 which deals with police -- school and police cooperation. We oppose Senate Bill 178 concerning the termination of parental -- child support after the termination of parental rights. We oppose Senate Bill 1155 that concerns alimony. We oppose House Bill 6685 on shared custody and in regard to House Bill No. 6688 we ask that you remove section 6 from the bill which deals with motions for contempt and motions to modify.

I want to speak to you in the time I have briefly on three of those five bills and I'm clearly happy to answer any questions I can about all five of them.

Let me start with section 6 of House Bill No. 6688. We're fine with the bill in general but that section would repeal 46b-8 of the General Statutes which is a section that says when you have a motion for contempt and a motion for modification you should hear them together.

We think that's important to keep because for a number of reasons it's important that they be

they're going to end up with child support orders after termination.

The proper way to deal with the kind of situation that I know several years ago led to this prop -- proposal is -- is a support order but with no visitation rights and that accomplishes the goal if -- if there's need based on the situation to prevent that person from -- from being with the child. At the same time it preserves the liability for support.

Finally in regard to House Bill No. 6685 which is the shared custody bill, I guess I need to say a couple of things in introduction on that. I very much support and I think we support the notion that -- that both parents should have well-established and -- and continuing relationships with the child.

A lot of the testimony that I heard when I was in the room was actually not about this bill but about, for example, GALs that don't behave properly, you know, do their job right, I think the current statute gets it. That's to say there's a presumption when the parents agree on joint custody. There should be joint custody. Judges should not interfere with that.

There's a parenting plan in all cases that addresses the whole range of parenting issues but there are many circumstances where it's not likely to work. It's a problem if the parents can't work with each other and in default cases it really is not workable.

Thank -- thank you very much.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there questions for Attorney Podolsky?

are really non-controversial are already in I think 6688. All these numbers sound the same to me. So -- so I think that that's the statute would work -- you would work with and I then as I said if you -- I'd ask you to take a look at section 6 and perhaps take it out of 6688.

REP. REBIMBAS: Okay, thank you.

RAPHAEL L. PODOLSKY: Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: I guess that's it for questions. Thank you for your testimony.

RAPHAEL L. PODOLSKY: Thank you very much.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thomas Weissmuller.

THOMAS WEISSMULLER: I've been nursing the last 10 percent of my notes battery so I will hope they will not die out on me here.

My name is Thomas Weissmuller. I'm a retired trial judge and current chairman of the National Parents Organization, Connecticut chapter. Today I'm appearing on behalf of the National Parents Organization and in my personal capacity as one who has endured the Connecticut family court system.

I'll speak on behalf of Raised Bill Numbers 1155, 6688 and 6685. These bills will bring much needed reform to the family law system by removing inappropriate references to gender where gender is irrelevant to an inquiry by defining a methodology for the establishment of alimony where no methodology presently exists.

And by redefining the role of one parent from that of visitor, under the current paradigm, to

that of a true parent with a meaningful obligation to provide emotional support, decision-making and physical care for the substantial period of time under -- under every parenting plan.

I understand that the language is only to be applied when it is agreed and that obviously is something we would hope would be removed if the bill comes out of Judiciary so it wouldn't just go for agreements but that that be the presumption in all matters unless proven otherwise.

Connecticut continues to ferret out gender biases within its statutory scheme by redefining benefits for wives as benefits for spouses and reclassifying obligations for husbands as obligations for spouses. We have confidence that you are acknowledging the impropriety of referencing gender when describing parental and spousal obligations.

We are certain that you do not intend the laws to be defined to support an 87 percent custodial loss rate for fathers.

As with husband and wife, the word alimony is a term of art with roots in church law. We hope you will continue progressive reform by defining alimony as spousal maintenance. Today the Legislature acknowledges that married people, male or female, gay or not, enjoy equal rights as citizens. Published laws do not yet demonstrate this truth so further amendments are likely necessary.

Spousal maintenance is an equitable remedy utilized to overcome financial imbalances that have occurred during the marriage. It is rehabilitative in nature, it is not punitive

nor is it permanent. Connecticut should adopt a model law on spousal maintenance and eviscerate all references to alimony and the historic bias it conjures if possible. We understand that's not yet the paradigm but it's moving in that direction.

For my part I do not pay alimony. I enjoyed shared parenting to the extent permitted by my children's school year residence in Alaska. I have endured parental alienation. Alaska law has allowed me to address parental alienation on several occasions without fully retrying my Connecticut case.

There is no comparable provision under Connecticut law to address parental alienation. I implore you on behalf of myself and on behalf of our organization to craft one. Please ensure that judges are guided to favor equal or near equal parenting time. Remove the children from the fight.

While the guardian ad litem on my case performed adequately, she might have been trained to testify more clearly. Connecticut lacks standard protections to ensure appointment of qualified guardian ad litem. There are no rules to govern billing practices, limit investigations or prevent GALs from essentially riding herd on a case. There are some very excellent guardian ad litem. Unfortunately as you've heard today there are some that appear to abuse their opportunity to serve as guardian ad litem.

And states have crafted regulations and rules to prevent this from happening. These model codes are available. I worked for years in the Seattle arena. We -- I served on over 100 cases as a guardian ad litem. I could not work

outside of my order and expect to be paid for it.

I represented the best interests of an incapacitated person or -- alleged incapacitated or minor child. I couldn't engage in advocacy beyond my call in my order and expect to be paid for it and I wouldn't. Similar rules could be implemented here. Statutory guidance is essential to that end.

During the course of my trial on custody, a large portion of testimony of the guardian ad litem was -- was stricken from the record because when she testified she used the word felt instead of the word deduced when describing her conclusions.

The judge offered no opportunity for rehabilitation. The judge's temperament varied wildly from day to day as did her evidentiary rulings. She refused, for example, to take judicial notice of a calendar yet she took judicial notice of a fact that every Alaskan citizen receives money from the state rather than pays taxes.

Please consider working with the Judiciary to ensure that our judges are adequately trained at the National Judicial College or in a comparable forum. Not every appointed judge is a former trial attorney.

We should seek excellence in judicial service. Consider protections relative to guardian ad litem service and improve GAL training. As chairman of the National Parents Organization in Connecticut I have learned that my experience is not unusual. I feel it calls on a regular basis as more parents, men and women,

approach me with the challenges they face in your family court system.

You have heard powerful testimony today. Please hear these cries for help. If you are a parent, think of your own children and improve the system before you must rely on it.

I'll limit my comments to those, there are more but I understand that this particular bill is probably -- the alimony bill is the strong one and there's a good chance that there might be a commission or someone to investigate and the propriety of the shared parenting bill and possibly adding to it.

If that commission or something like that comes into fruition, I would hope you would contact our organization so that we might try and provide further information for you and support for that initiative and possibly personnel if you're looking for people to put on that kind of an investigative body.

Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you. In your service as a -
- a GAL, can you -- have you ever sought the payment of a retainer from the parents of minor a child?

THOMAS WEISSMULLER: No, sir.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Okay. Can you think of any circumstances that might justify the payment of a retainer to a GAL?

THOMAS WEISSMULLER: In my experience that wouldn't be appropriate. In Connecticut I understand that it's done.

SENATOR COLEMAN: It is done. Have you -- I guess -
- I don't know if you -- you've indicated
you've done research on it but you -- you just
commented it is done in Connecticut. Under
what circumstances might it be done in
Connecticut?

THOMAS WEISSMULLER: My under -- my recollection is
that the guardian ad litem who worked on my
case when I was a party to a custody battle
here in Connecticut, I say battle, custody
case, I believe she asked for money up front
from each of us \$1,500 to get started.

She had a very reasonable bill. I think she
did a fine job. I have no issues with the
guardian ad litem that worked on my case.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Okay.

THOMAS WEISSMULLER: When it comes to
representations that I hear from our members,
we have a large group and a growing group, the
guardian ad litem concern surprised me. I
regularly correspond with the people who write
me on these issues and what I do is I
essentially parrot the protections that the
courts in the Seattle area imposed so that
guardian ad litem were confined in their
orders.

And basically the judges were always counseled
to look at the order and there had to be a
hearing. For example, I would present, as a
guardian ad litem in Washington Superior Court,
15 days prior to the final hearing, I would
present my bill including an affidavit of fees
that broke down my hourly rate and the charge
per hour to the tenth of the hour on anything I
did.

I was confined to 10 hours of work. If I needed more time, I sought that time and I would advise all the parties that I would be seeking that time. Rarely would I need more time to do my job. I was supposed to investigate and report. I wasn't supposed to go to every deposition. I wasn't supposed to do all of these other things.

If it came to trial, I would expect to be sequestered as a witness although I could request additional authority from the court so that I could participate as an attorney. I was a trial attorney as well. These things aren't unusual they are just not done here.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Did you ever sit as a guardian ad litem during the course of a trial?

THOMAS WEISSMULLER: Yes I -- I have. I've participated in trials as a guardian ad litem and as an attorney representing one.

SENATOR COLEMAN: What would be the role in the capacity of a guardian ad litem?

THOMAS WEISSMULLER: In the trial I -- in -- in several trials I requested the ability to ask questions if I felt that it would be necessary and the judge granted with regard to certain issues that were being explored in the trial that I could ask questions relative to those prior to the parties' attorneys had opportunities to follow up. Most times I would not ask for that because there really would be no reason.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Did you seek or receive permission to interpose objections during the course of the trial?

THOMAS WEISSMULLER: I had the ability to do that in some occasions if, as in the -- the circumstance I just described, I was sitting at the Bar as opposed to being sequestered or outside of the -- the courtroom.

Many of the cases that I worked on involved things like minor settlements for children where I represented the interests of the child and there may be a challenge as to how money might be spent on behalf of the child by a step-parent, things of that nature, not necessarily in custody matters although I have represented in child custody and dependency matters as well. Still the same would apply.

There would be very few reasons for me to cross-examine. I would essentially be a witness. Everyone would have been provided with my report long in advance of the trial. If they wish to depose me they could have, although I cannot recall a specific occasion where I was ever deposed as a guardian ad litem.

Usually just the informal representations plus my report and of course you're -- you're an officer of the court so you're not going to be committing perjury.

And -- and also one of the protections that I found to be essential in the Washington system is that five days, within five days of an appointment, appointment was done on a rotating basis. Guardian ad litem had to attend special qualifying classes every other year.

There were lots of classes for guardian ad litem in the form of continuing legal education and, if you wanted to be a family court guardian ad litem, you needed to have

five years of family practice in addition to the other training.

If you were appointed, every party had five days, before you started anything, to have you removed for various reasons. You either charged too much. There could be a conflict of interest.

You could approach the guardian ad litem informally and if someone did not like something that they saw in a prior case they could simply state it then the guardian ad litem is going to come off, similar to a recusal for a -- for a judge. There's a first recusal in Superior Court in Washington. You don't have that opportunity here as I understand. You may get stuck with whatever judge you draw and if you understand the biases of the judge well you're going to endure them.

Those protections can be classified in statute and the judiciary can be directed to implement them through rule and I understand it's a different paradigm here. They have a practice book of sorts that tends to mirror the rules you propose but I think in the end you probably will find that this will improve everyone's opportunity to have a fair and unbiased guardian ad litem and really challenge the fees.

I cannot conceive of a guardian ad litem that would -- that would ever bill more than \$10,000 on a case. I cannot conceive of that. What are they doing? If their investigation is over, what are they doing? Are they attending depositions? Do they believe that they're acting in the some capacity as an attorney and, if so, why are they not held to the standard of the attorney?

An attorney cannot act on behalf of an individual party without a contract to do so that specifically defines the nature of the fee, how they will bill and so on. That -- that contract doesn't exist so there's no mechanism to enforce things that they bill willy-nilly. They have to bill in accordance with an order.

If they work outside of their charge, there should be no judicial mechanism that could enforce that bill. Why would you ever pay? If you were the judge and you looked at it, I can't -- and I have -- I was a judge for 15 years. I had guardian ad litem who routinely worked in front of me for 15 years.

There would occasionally be an exception to a bill but the standard that we applied is -- is the guardian ad litem working in accordance with his charge throughout the case. I have never seen in 15 years a bill for more than \$10,000 from a guardian ad litem.

SENATOR COLEMAN: How did the rotating assignment of guardian ad litem work? Was there just a pool of guardian ad litem and the presiding judge just assigned as a -- when it came to the next name?

THOMAS WEISSMULLER: Yes and the way it would work ultimately -- I remember I -- I pulled my name off the guardian ad litem registry in several counties because you really had to be ready to go. You knew you didn't have to start necessarily for a week unless someone came in with also an ex parte request for an immediate emergency investigation which could -- while you might ultimately come off the case, I was never asked to leave a case.

If -- if they came in with some request like that, you may have to literally start your investigation right away. The idea is that you would take a call -- the registry worked so that they would literally pull the next name. They'd pull three, they'd ask the clerk to step out and this clerk would make a call and everyone on the registry knew that they had to have a phone number that could allow for an immediate return call.

So they had my cell phone number and if I could take the case I would take the case. I might ask the parties if I felt that there was a potential for a conflict in a smaller county but each county maintained the registry.

And the other thing that was important is that the counties would maintain registries as well for -- you could in Snohomish County, for example, agree to work on a pro bono registry for the indigent. I don't understand why if you have a guardian ad litem program you do not have a pro bono guardian ad litem program. It -- it doesn't hurt us to take a case for free or to take a case at a minimum pay where Snohomish County paid \$300.

Now all that's going to do is basically cover your time but you're going to put 10, 12 hours at the most into that case and you're going to get \$300 or another county might say \$300 and 45 an hour for so many hours that can approved above the 300. That's in cases involving indigent people.

I don't understand why, if we have a complex system in court, we don't have that system. It's -- it's easily remedied. Young attorneys are willing to work for \$45 an hour and learn and earn their stripes as a guardian ad litem.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you.

Are there others with questions?

If not, I appreciate your input here.

THOMAS WEISSMULLER: Thank you for your time.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Sara Frankel.

SARA FRANKEL: Good evening, Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Sara Frankel and I'm the public policy director for children, youth and young adults with the Connecticut chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness and I am here today on behalf of NAMI Connecticut to support H.B. 6682, AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL.

You've heard a lot today about this bill and I'd like to speak to it from the perspective of mental health and children with psychiatric disabilities. Many of the behaviors exhibited by children that lead to school-based arrests are often the result of unmet behavioral and mental health needs. It is widely recognized that 20 percent of all children have a diagnosis -- a diag -- diagnosable mental health condition.

Drop-out rates among students classified as emotionally disturbed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act are alarmingly high, over 50 percent. Additionally 55 to 70 percent of youth in juvenile detention have a diagnosable behavioral health condition.

Rather than pushing children out of -- of school for problem behaviors, we must work

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and psychiatric disabilities are best served by their schools and communities.

Thanks for your time.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank -- thank you.

Are there questions?

There are none. Thank you very much.

Cheryl Martone.

CHERYL MARTONE: I should start out by saying testifying on Bill 6685 and everybody knows what that is of shared parenting and I would like to really see it called equal parenting.

Thank you Chairs and the ones that are still here, Representative Rebimbas and Representative Gonzalez. I am Cheryl Martone of Westbrook, Connecticut. You know who I'm -- I am and for those who don't I grew up with an uncle who is a dean of psychology at Miami University. My mother was -- in my twenties -- when I was in my twenties was a private investigator. My niece is a biochemist, graduated magna cum laude from So -- South Central Commun -- South -- Southern Connecticut State University.

I actually serve the parents of Connecticut in this -- in this -- in Connecticut in this country and other countries and I am contacted here as a -- and I'm a parent lobbyist because I'm contacted because I have my name all over blogs everywhere, on Facebook. Serve as a judicial abuse advocate and I promo -- pro -- constitution right to be a parent and to raise our children as we see fit in the best interests of our children.

My child's life has been negatively impacted, altered, cut off from his normal wholesome activities he wanted to do and was used in -- and was used to in -- in deliberately -- deliberate detrimental ways.

The GAL, Sue Cousineau and numerous attorneys and biased judges, money-sucking AMCs, especially the GAL lied all the time knowingly what she said would extract our child from our lives at her own selfish speed. When I asked her why she said things in the court, she said that she could. I said wrong answer.

She kept insisting because I didn't know the laws and I didn't know how cruel they would be. She kept me from my son who will be successful today -- and my son could be successful today if it wasn't for her and the faulty system. She kept him to see what she could get monetarily out of the system and from my family when I had a good home for him to live in and was a fit parent.

He was drugged. Chemically forced annihilation gives a feeling of helplessness and hopefulness -- hopelessness just like the courts tried to do. I managed to get him out (inaudible) he was molested. The negligence in the CPS, DCF and family court system is a horrible nightmare.

It must be reconstructed. The way I extracted him out of the system 75 percent and he -- they're -- they're still like -- attack him in the school system, is to expose them in the media, blogs, everywhere. Tell the truth, that's what I say in the courts.

An evidentiary hearing, recent case law and amicus brief and solutions that would work.

Please make this law -- please make this bill into a law and add 5436, parental alienation, to impose civil penalties, pay a fine for the other parent and DCF too, or GALs, that deliberately close a parental -- a child parental alienation separation from their parents to be away from a good, protective, fit, loving parent.

Who -- who suffers trauma? The child suffers the trauma. The parent suffers the trauma because of the unlawful separation. State that the judges must force the parental alienation parent to let the both parents see the children.

Just like they forced a GAL on our children and us. Equal custody, both parents in the children's lives, no questions asked, and whoever violates this shall be in -- like it says in the bill crim -- the criminal -- criminal investigation -- not be fined more than \$2,000 and imprisoned.

I mean why is this going on in our country? Here -- here's my son, full pictures of my son with me, happy, happy and he's very -- his life is very unhappy. He's going to be 18 and his life is pretty much lost.

So I just wanted to read you a quick poem from -- written by victims of parental alienation and this is from Joanie Kloth's book of Broken Family Bonds: Poems and Stories From Victims of Parental Alienation, I Never Asked for It by Kathy Turetski.

I never ask for it and yet it happened to me. I felt I lost my child and yet he as alive. My child thought I was a bad parent and yet I exceeded the expectations of a mother role. I

felt I lived my life for my children and yet I was beaten down as a bad parent. I was alienated from my child and yet I truly loved and wanted my child. I was determined to never give up. And yet it didn't seem to help. I continued anyways and yet after several attempts I felt I was in a losing situation and yet it didn't happen.

I did get my child back and yet I continued to pray and all those parents who are still trying and yet another day goes by without your child in your life and yet you are alienated from your child.

Continue to make another attempt and yet one day it will happen when it may be the last attempt you have to make.

Children should not be alienated from their parents and I feel this bill should be equal parenting. Both parents should be in the (inaudible) children's lives unless a criminal act is committed.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Thank you, Ms. Martone.

Are there questions?

Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

CHERYL MARTONE: Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Maureen Kahn.

MAUREEN KAHN: I don't have any idea what time it is so good evening. It's been a long day. I support House Bill No. 6685. I haven't seen my son since the week after Christmas. I -- they -- the courts took my son August 10, 2010.

They unlawfully threw me into jail, ripped by shoulder, caused me damage.

While I was in this jail, I was, you know, given some medications and they kept giving me pills. Didn't know what they were giving me and they wrecked my liver. Right now I'm more concerned about my dad because he's kind of on -- he's passing on us but my son is in the hands of his abusive father.

We've already proven the case over and over again. My case is FA00 which means 2000. My son is now 14 years old. He was molested by his father for sure. We know this because he's been seen, he's been given a forensic evaluation that Judge Boland ordered himself and then he recused himself from the case when we were in court November of 2008.

I filed an appeal against him January 29, 2009. It was never heard. It was dismissed by the appeal -- Appellate Court which I did everything right. I did a -- I did file a brief. I did everything supposedly correctly and we were just heard in April of 2012 and the Supreme Court ruled that I was allowed to bring it to the Appellate Court -- back to the Appellate Court and sexual abuse was mentioned in there.

Because Judge Boland had ruled to give my son to his father, full custody to his father, even though he recused himself, I feel that there's too many things going on in the family courts. It's unheard of; it's absolutely unlawful and immoral. I just want my son back.

I had him, I was the primary parent. I did everything DCF told me to do. I kept quiet, didn't talk in front of him. He drew pictures,

he did -- he didn't sexually act out with other kids and I don't know how else I could have approached it.

I had him going to counseling. I was ridiculed. I was treated like I was a piece of garbage. I'm a mom of a 32 and 30 year old in May. I've already raised two boys. I already know what the system is about. I've been involved in that court for -- for 17 years and I've asked for a change of venue so that I wouldn't be discriminated against because I have one leg. I've been called a one-legged wonder. It's -- it's unbelievable and I don't know how to make the nightmares stop.

When -- when you hear the thing about the dads it's not only the dads, I'm seeing it with the moms all over place and I think that they're trying to make such a -- an extreme change over -- it all depends on the mood of the judge and my GAL was hostile towards me in front of a psychologist, in front of a medical doctor, in front of the people at the Joshua Center and Natchaug Hospital.

I loved what you said. I mean just anything that you were talking about before with -- without -- the girls that are coming to you and -- and the moms and the dads. We're all having situations in court and it's bordering in illegal -- illegal kidnapping of our children.

They're not listening to us. They're not paying attention to the real things that are happening. They're disregarding psychologist - - thank you -- they're disregarding psychologist's reports. They're disregarding just about everything.

I mean my son, like I said, he acted out in school for God sakes. It wasn't on my time, it was on his father's time and he's talked about it. He wrote a letter to President Obama and he says I know what my father did to me and I want to be a lawyer for kids only.

He's there because -- my -- he -- he just -- I have the letters if you guys want a copy but I just didn't make any copies. I'm sorry. I just want my son back. It's two years and eight months and it's ridiculous.

They -- they actually took our dog and our cat to lure my son to his father's home to make him go to his father's home and my son -- my son was so strong. He refused for three and one half months and that's when he wrote that letter to President Obama. I get a letter back from President Obama, when I finally got it months later because my lawyer quit on me and said I'm not bringing up sexual abuse and I think he was absolutely shocked that we ended up winning the Supreme Court case because he didn't say much.

But he ended up giving me this letter and I -- I never knew it existed until months later so I sent it to President Obama and they sent back to me and said go back to all those agencies I've been to. I've been to DCF seven times the case was open. I've been to -- all these agencies have -- all these people were here, it's unbelievable, the Child Protection Agency, Carolyn Signorelli, John Callis, all these people that were in DCF Ombudsman's office and it's just unreal how it's -- it's corrupt.

At this point it's -- I have no faith in the system. So the system is broken. The GAL actually sneered at me and told me you're not

going to get a forensic evaluation for your son. That was the first GAL. Swore because I had court orders from May 2002 to have a -- have a forensic evaluation, if somebody had done something then, my son would have been okay.

Now we had a -- a guy do it for -- forensic in May 2009. That -- it took seven years to get a -- an actual forensic evaluation by an expert in the field and the judge ignored it.

So we have situations that are potentially damaging to the child in the future. He has a recidivism rate in this report of up to 17 to 27 percent. I'm not saying that my son is going to be a bad boy but I'm just afraid for him because he's not getting the help he needs right now.

And I was getting that help for him and I was paying attention to him and I was paying attention to his needs. He's going down in school. I mean the -- the separation is sick, it's wrong and I can't afford to go to the -- I can't afford to pay the father's portion towards the psychologist that they -- the -- the G -- the AMC picked, hand-picked, and he was very nasty to me and now because I can't pay it they're putting me into collections.

So I don't get to see my son over money since the week after Christmas and my son is getting -- you know he's getting all kinds of stories so he has no idea what he's allowed to do. He always said in -- even in visitations -- in supervised visitations I'm not allowed, I don't know, I'm not supposed to.

I don't know what I'm supposed to do. I -- I don't see my lawyer. My AMC doesn't see me but

she sends -- sends me bills for thousands, you know. I've been attacked for that also.

The judge said bring a toothbrush you might be going to jail because I live on disability and they took my disability away and gave it to the father. They wanted to actually put me down to zero, take my full social security permanent disability away from me and give it to the father and they wanted -- because they overpaid, you know, they paid me for a little while because they told me it was okay. I don't know what they're doing and this is government.

They want \$3,100 back from me and I have no money. I have no way to survive. My car is dead. I can't get to court and then the AMC is also pushing off court as long as she can. The AMC keeps on -- what do you call it -- continuing my motions for a change of venue, a change of GAL, a -- a -- to dismiss the AMC because she was -- I already contended her -- contacted her to be my attorney and that's an extreme conflict of interest.

But when they brought me back in -- in chains and I was -- after jail, they said I had to take her. I mean there's a lot of forcing when you go in front of these judges. There's no agreement. I can't call any one of those an agreement. I was forced to -- if I wanted to see my son, I had to sign the agreement.

So it -- it's -- it's just getting ridiculous. I don't know what to do. It's -- it's years in court. I'm tired, I'm just tired and this is why people walk away and people don't report to DCF because DCF turns on you. They don't help children at all.

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I'm sorry.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Are there questions for Ms. Kahn?

REP. GONZALEZ: Yeah I've got a question.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ: How old is your son?

MAUREEN KAHN: He's now -- he just turned 14 and I had to beg to have him see my father in the hospital. My father is on a breathing tube. He's 73 years old and we beg -- had to beg to let him -- get his father to bring him over. That's the last I saw of my son.

Actually I -- I saw him only briefly in there because he -- he went in to see my dad and then left.

REP. GONZALEZ: And when you report that your son was sexually assaulted, who was the judge?

MAUREEN KAHN: Judge Boland and -- and Judge -- it - - it goes back a long time; he was two and one half and he was speaking about it. He drew pictures of -- over it. He had counselors. He had DCF. Nobody would listen.

REP. GONZALEZ: You said Judge Bowman?

MAUREEN KAHN: Boland, B-o-l-a-n-d. I'm fed up. I don't know what else to do. So I'm going to be -- I'm going to be sanctioned. I'm going to get in trouble for this because I'm saying names.

REP. GONZALEZ: I know.

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MAUREEN KAHN: But now, if I go back to the other court, Judge Boland got transferred out, now we have Shluger who was supposed to be on the case from the be -- when -- from the -- 1/29/09 Judge Shluger took over because Judge Boland recused himself, it's on the record, but when I filed a judicial review against Judge Boland for doing this, for taking the case back and giving my son to his father and sanctioning me and -- and putting me in jail for a month, I mean I was in the medical unit. It was -- it was pretty bad. I was isolated, I was in isolation.

But since then I was -- I mean Judge Shluger should have had this case all the way through. I don't know how he is going to be un -- they pushed me off again March 12 because my father was sick and I couldn't -- I couldn't go in. They pulled the tube out of his throat and he breathed on his own and looked at me so I couldn't take my mom away from that.

REP. GONZALEZ: And where do you have to go to court, where?

MAUREEN KAHN: In Norwich.

REP. GONZALEZ: Norwich.

MAUREEN KAHN: In Norwich, yeah. I'm on the other side of the state. But I mean I've tried everything. I've been -- I've been actually teased and -- and called the one legged wonder by law -- lawyers. They dropped the criminal case. They tried to say custodial interference. I wasn't interfering. I was forced out of my home and I -- I moved, yes I had to move. There's no place in Connecticut that I could afford.

So they've -- they've kind of attacked the heck out of me, you know? I lost my home. I lost everything. I -- I lost my home so then I lost my son. It's just sick. And I raised him, he was in my home -- I -- more -- he -- his -- he went to his father 20 hours a week and then he went 47 hours a week. They kept pushing even though they knew about the sexual abuse they pushed for overnights, they pushed for a lot of things.

Now at this point I don't know if my son is going to be okay because with his P -- he has PTSD, (inaudible) and he has a sense of -- and -- and capresis. It was all documented in the record. He had severe anxiety and he's got access codes all over the place. What are they doing? They send him to a psychologist that calls me crazy and she is telling him this and he says oh you shouldn't be talking about my father and you shouldn't be doing these things.

You can tell parental alienation is definite because he's like -- he -- he's such a different kid. It's -- it's been two years and eight months and he's angry and he doesn't about -- why I'm not seeing him so he's angry with me. I'm being blamed for it, you know.

And anyway that's all I have to say.

REP. GONZALEZ: Thank -- thank you for coming.
Thank you.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Joey Whatley.

A VOICE: He's not here.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Margaret Mansfield.

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JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

April 5, 2013
10:00 A.M.

MARGARET MANSFIELD: (Inaudible). Hi my name is Margaret Mansfield, known as Peg Mansfield. I'm a mother of five children ages 10 through 30. And because of the spacing of the age over the past 30 years I've always had at least one or more children under the age of 10 which makes me a career mommy and it's who I am. It's been that way for my whole life.

(HB6685)

I am fresh out of the courtroom, talk about a tough room. Within the last 24 hours the biggest gasps that came out of all your faces today happened to me yesterday in New Haven Court.

After three and one half years of dealing with incompetent GALs and prejudice, I had that beating in -- in mediation yesterday so I would just like to point out when I got here Senator Len Fasano had -- had been talking about everything that applied to me yesterday.

The -- I had a GAL that was appointed to my case back in the beginning and she -- she stopped answering my phone calls half way through the -- the whole thing after I begged her to intervene many times on my -- my husband's neglect of mental health.

She kept saying well if you don't like it just get another GAL. And so she said just file a motion, file a motion and all along the joke was I had no money to file a motion but finally I found a certified GAL who was willing to do pro bono work and yesterday I finally filed a motion and it got kicked out because the -- the boys club there vehemently objected to just some woman being appointed.

She actually told me she would be thrilled to step aside. Anyway they tell me to let -- let

it -- let it all go. My statement that I planned to talk about today about the system is failing me it's more about how I hope that when you pass this bill with the presumption of share custody, you'll -- you'll definitely use the terminology with -- with or without an agreement because one parent who is hostile against another and acts punitively against them can sabotage joint custody just by refusing to communicate and that's what happened to me in that horrible room yesterday.

Because of a lack of presumption of shared parenting I was ejected from my home in 2010. I'm about to take a risk right now for -- to reveal information that's probably going to affect my reputation publically but it's important that I do because even though I'm -- I'm done in -- in the court and I lost, I hope to help others in the future.

The -- the system is not only prejudice, and no disrespect, Senator Coleman, about swaying toward in favor of the woman, but in my experience, in my case yesterday and all through these last three and one half years it has been slanted in the ca -- in the favor of whichever party does not have any problems on paper or any mental health ill diagnosis on paper.

They can have one but if they didn't go for help and it doesn't show up on a piece of paper anywhere, then they're the perfect one and then there's the bad one that has the diagnosis.

So I -- I lost my home and I was -- it was -- each case is individually now decided by judges when there's minor children and that's why I have to tell you, although I had previously suffered from medical diagnosis of alcoholism

which I fully own, I've been eight months in recovery at that time but the judge wanted to move the case off her desk so she picked the perfect parent, the one without the diagnosis.

And so the home that my father bought for me to raise my children in was handed over to him two days after Christmas and suddenly I found myself homeless for the first time in my life not just homeless for the first time in my life but alone. I had never spent even a single night alone of my entire life. I've been stripped of my 28 year job tucking my kids in every night singing them lullabies.

There should have been wording in place to force a burden of proof or -- or a valid reason before I lost my parental rights. There should be something in place saying that you can't just pick one. We should start out on an even playing field with shared custody and then you have to -- you have to really investigate which one deserves to have custody before you go throwing somebody out in the street.

Several days later I was not -- in standing in a courtroom after being thrust into my car in the middle of the winter and my attorney is just saying oh just sign this piece of paper, it's the only hope you ever have of getting your kids back and I -- I said if -- and he said if you don't sign it the judge is going to rule it anyway.

Well it turned out that piece of paper was me giving sole custody to my ex-husband and possession of my home that my father bought for me. Ten days later I landed in Yale-New Haven Hospital with a complete emotional breakdown and relapse.

The good news is I think then I got help and since that day I've been successfully maintaining remission of my disease, actively daily healthy lifestyle. I was told in judge's chambers back in the beginning that I needed to prove one year of sobriety and get involved in programs which I did times ten and on my own I volunteered.

So I set out in baby steps to achieve the goal. In the meantime I was humiliated and treated like a violent criminal. My children and I suffered through the traumatic experience of having to go to supervised visitation. We sat in a room twice a month for 20 minutes. Now this is after me being a full-time caregiver, 24 hours a day since they were born.

Now I'm sitting in a room twice a month for 20 minutes. It's got cinder blocks, no windows, a two-way mirror that the kids can see the people on the other side. They had nightmares about who's watching us from that window. They -- they were horrified. We'll never be the same over that.

And I never committed a single crime of neglect or abuse or harm of any kind to any of my five children. Well one year came and went and I proved everything I supposed to do. Again documentation from doctors, hospitals, programs, therapy but my case came and went. It was presented -- it was blocked by the attorney opposing and I was never given my right for a hearing.

In fact last summer the barricade even grew because the judge sitting on the bench, after we had finally gotten a hearing on the docket and we were all sitting there and six people took the day off from work to testify for me,

and I -- a stack of docket is this high to prove my -- my compliance with the program, the judge said, and I quote, you don't think I'm going to hear this today do you? And my attorney said yes, Your Honor, it's on the docket. She said judges have families. It's summer. I don't have time.

So a year became a year and one half, a year and one half became two years came and went. I still haven't had my hearing in court. Yesterday I was -- a month ago my attorney swore at me purposely in front of the other opposing counsel. He looked over this shoulder to make they were listening, he swore at me and called me a liar in the hallway of the court so I started trying to find another attorney.

I combed the state for every pro bono possible and all of it came back to me saying that I had to apply through Statewide Legal which is the umbrella organization in Connecticut that you have to apply through and they called me back after I went through the whole process, said I was approved but that oops back in the beginning they answered one question from my ex-husband over the phone. That precludes me from any help in the whole State of Connecticut from any organization because of a conflict of interest.

And so now I'm standing there and my lawyer shows up yesterday and he with -- withdraws and I object and I object and the judge says I'm going to allow it. So now I'm standing there by myself thinking it's just a cus -- a status conference and I'm going to get a date for a hearing and everybody just jumped on me like -- like wolfs.

And the next thing I know I'm in mediation and I've got four people, all different directions, firing at me telling me I've got to sign this paper and if it's all about me and what are you doing back here, why aren't you working on your sobriety and -- and I -- I just said wait a minute I don't have an attorney. No I -- I'm here to just get shared joint custody for my children.

And that's all I wanted all along and I've been in compliance so two and one half years have gone by, may I have my hearing at least, my day in court? And the mediator said you're not going to get it. Based on what I'm seeing right now I would award sole custody to your ex-husband never mind joint anything and if you go to a hearing the judge is going to take my recommendation so you're done. Don't put your kids through that. Don't go through this. You're not going to win. I'm saving you. Just sign this right now.

So an hour and one half later, after being flooded from left and right, I -- I found myself in tears like the woman said and I felt like I was cut and bleeding and -- and they wouldn't allow me to bring an advocate in the room and they say I couldn't leave that office. I said may I have one night to think about this and they said no. You sign it now or it's off the table.

So I signed it but I went in front of the judge and he said you -- you signed this that you agree. I said but really I want to put on record I want co-parent counseling and -- and I also want -- they had put in a motion at the last minute just to intimidate me that they're asking for custody child support where I -- I just got a new job and I said I -- I would like

that to be some kind of wording saying that you're going to hold off on that because I'm just trying to get on my feet.

They wouldn't put that wording in and absolutely refused to put any wording in about co-parenting counseling to hold my ex-husband account -- accountable. And so as -- as of yesterday I had -- I have nothing and I ended up signing where I get joint custody but someone else said it with final say to him which is exactly the same that I've been dealing with.

My little girl tried to hang herself last year. She's nine years old. When she was eight she found pornography on my ex-husband's computer. He exposed her to that. He's a computer person. He didn't block the computer. She found it on there then she brilliantly found it on her own Itouch that he gave her and didn't block. She brought it to school, for two and one half weeks all of her little buddies on the bus watched videos of pornography, eight years old.

I only found out about it because one of the parents called the school. Now I bring it to court and my lawyer won't let me bring it up in the court because he says it makes everyone uncomfortable. And I said good, good it makes them uncomfortable because I can't scrape it off the brain of my child.

And -- and now I need her to be in therapy but because I have no counseling -- no legal right, I can't make them do it so that went on. She ended up getting bullied because of that and her -- the neglect -- so many -- 310 pages worth of documentation of neglect of hygiene and -- and me asking for co-parent counseling.

The poor child smells. She's the smelliest kid in fourth grade and -- and so in April of last year I'm noticing something is going on. I call the doctors, I call the therapist, I call everyone and I -- I begged them to please see my daughter and they said we can't you have no legal right to make us and we can't help you.

Three days later in my husband's bathtub she tried to hang herself and those bruises around her neck that day I said now they'll listen to me, now. I spent hours the Thursday before crying on the phone with the pediatrician and now they'll listen to me. Wrong, I can't even bring that up in court because it looks like I'm attacking my ex-husband.

So anyways all I'm asking for is shared custody and I -- I ask for it in -- in the way -- and they accused me of asking for it -- oh I'm sorry.

Okay I just want to point out that what happened to me yesterday was a -- a massive violation of my parental rights. It's a crime and the mediator complained about how old my case is and nobody feels that passage of time more than myself and my children and my answer is to put it in the -- in the words of a song from Rent. You know it -- she said that more time has to pass, not one year, not five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes, it's two years and three months and my children feel every single moment of one million fifty-nine thousand nine hundred minutes. How do you measure the time in the life of a child?

Thank you.

REP. GONZALEZ: Ma'am, I have a question.

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JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

April 5, 2013

10:00 A.M.

MARGARET MANSFIELD: Okay.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Representative Gonzalez.

REP. GONZALEZ: And where do you go to court?

MARGARET MANSFIELD: New Haven.

REP. GONZALEZ: New Haven.

MARGARET MANSFIELD: No surprise there.

REP. GONZALEZ: And -- and who was the judge?

MARGARET MANSFIELD: Conroy, Conroy

REP. GONZALEZ: Conway?

MARGARET MANSFIELD: Yeah Conway, sorry.

A VOICE: (Inaudible).

MARGARET MANSFIELD: No yesterday's judge was Burke but the one that -- that has been -- that told me that it was summer and judges have families all along it's been Conway but yesterday was Burke.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Burke.

REP. GONZALEZ: And --and can't -- you can't go back because if you sign those papers can you go back?

MARGARET MANSFIELD: They told me I couldn't and I -
- they -- they put in wording that I would have to ask permission to file any kind of a motion but she said you can ask permission all you want but we're -- it's not going to be allowed. They're just going to look at it and say you don't have enough reason no matter what.

REP. GONZALEZ: Who said that?

MARGARET MANSFIELD: The mediator, Phyllis Cummings.

REP. GONZALEZ: The mediator in New Haven.

MARGARET MANSFIELD: Yeah Phyllis Cummings had -- had told me that I lose. She said you lose. You will not get custody ever and -- and you're only going to end up losing joint custody in the final say which really to me effectively changes nothing.

REP. GONZALEZ: And when you was -- when you were seeing your -- your kids.

MARGARET MANSFIELD: Thank God I am seeing them.

REP. GONZALEZ: Oh you now are seeing --

MARGARET MANSFIELD: I do see them. They have -- they have increased the visitation at one point but again right up until this last week it was like an aunt. I would see them a couple of hours a week and I finally, through my priest, guilted them into getting me one overnight now. You know so -- so -- but I mean it's basically like they would visit a neighbor or an aunt once a month.

REP. GONZALEZ: Are you paying for supervised visits? Are they --

MARGARET MANSFIELD: In the beginning there was payment for supervised visits.

REP. GONZALEZ: For the supervised visits. A lot? How much were you paying?

MARGARET MANSFIELD: Well in the beginning I was paying out of my alimony and during all of my

recovery I -- I lost 70 pounds. I did everything I was supposed to do but I -- I didn't have good income. Now I -- I'm about to start a new job at Walmart thank -- thankfully but I -- and now they're trying to -- because they said they are going to sue me for -- for child support.

REP. GONZALEZ: So if you start working then -- then they're going to ask you for child support and also to pay supervised visit or yes?

MARGARET MANSFIELD: No, no supervised visits were over.

REP. GONZALEZ: Were over.

MARGARET MANSFIELD: And that was two years ago. So I've -- I've moved. A little at a time they would toss me a bone once in a while and say okay maybe not supervised but you have to -- you have to do it in front of a -- a family member that's approved by him and they have to sit there and watch you play with your kids.

It's so unnatural and so harmful to the children. I -- I swear they had nightmares. My daughter said mommy I had a nightmare last night somebody was watching me and they were going to kill me from behind the mirror.

And I -- you know I -- I mean that stuff messes with their heads and it wasn't bad enough that she had to that non -- then she had to see the pornography and nobody would let me talk to her that day. And -- and I -- you know nobody would let me put my arms around her and here's the -- the killer about it I was on the school property setting up my sound equipment to donate my services for a show that day and the school social worker knows me from my church

but in never occurred to her to call me because I don't have custodial rights.

She called my ex-husband while my daughter sat in a chair crying for two hours because she couldn't get through to my ex-husband. I'm down the hall in the gym and it never occurred to her because I don't have custodial rights. I don't know.

REP. GONZALEZ: Well thank -- thank you.

MARGARET MANSFIELD: I appreciate it.

REP. GONZALEZ: But I would like to talk to you before you leave.

MARGARET MANSFIELD: Okay. I -- I really am thankful for my father and other veterans for allowing me the first amendment and opportunity to stand here and speak to this today.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Annette Nunez. Richard Wax. Shirley Pripstein. Edie McClure. Monica Peters. Charles Crenshaw.

CHARLES R. CRENSHAW: Good evening.

SENATOR COLEMAN: Good evening.

CHARLES R. CRENSHAW: I've been sitting here all afternoon and re-writing and trashing things out because I don't want to repeat things that were said earlier. So I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to -- on behalf of Raised Bill No. 6688 -- I think I'll get a glass of water.

My name is Charles Crenshaw. I live in the town of Bloomfield. Mr. Maturo he has testified already and I don't want to repeat

**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2013**

**VETO
SESSION**

**VOL. 56
PART 17
5161 - 5482**

THE CHAIR:

Have all members voted? If all members have voted,
the machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk, will you call for the tally.

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill 1043 as amended

Total Number Voting	35
Those voting Yea	35
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	1

THE CHAIR:

The bill is passed.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I have a bill to add to our Consent
Calendar. I believe, first of all, on Senate Agenda
Number 1, previously adopted, Madam President, there
is Substitute House Bill 6685 and would move for
suspension for purposes of taking up that bill for
purposes of moving it to the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I would, therefore, move Substitute
House Bill 6685 to the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, at this point, I have a bill to actually remove from the Consent Calendar and to mark as pass, retaining its place on the Calendar and that is Calendar page --

THE CHAIR:

I apologize, Senator Looney. Can you say that one more time please.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, Madam President, an item previously placed on the Consent Calendar, would look to make a motion to remove that item from the Consent Calendar. That is Calendar page 20, Calendar 576, House Bill 6646. If that item might be removed from the Calendar and marked PT instead?

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, if the Clerk would --

THE CHAIR:

Senator Looney, could you stand at ease for a moment?

(Chamber at ease.)

SENATOR LOONEY:

Madam President.

THE CLERK:

-- House Bill 6685.

On page 4, Calendar 467, House Bill 6514.

On page 7, Calendar 57, House Bill 6515.

And on page 12, Calendar 669, House Bill 6610.

On page 13, Calendar 679, House Bill 5423.

On page 14, Calendar 688, House Bill 6477.

On page 15, Calendar 698, House Bill 6518; Calendar
699, House Bill 6389.

And on page 21, Calendar 630, House Joint Resolution
Number 45.

THE CHAIR:

Okay. Mr. Clerk, will you please call for roll call
vote. The machine will be open for Consent Calendar
1.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Senators return to the chamber please. Immediate roll
call on Consent Calendar Number 1 has been ordered in
the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

All members have voted? All members have voted, the
machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk, will you call the tally.

THE CLERK:

On Consent Calendar Number 1

Total Number Voting	35
Those voting Yea	35

Those voting Nay 0

Those absent and not voting 1

THE CHAIR:

The consent Calendar is passed.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, some additional items to mark go at this time.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

On Calendar page 4, Calendar 464, House Bill 5601 should be marked go.

Also Calendar page 4, Calendar 465, House Bill Number 6630 should be marked go.

Calendar page 10, Calendar 644, House Bill Number 6363 should be marked go.

Also, Madam President, Calendar page 8, Calendar 601, House Bill Number 6490 should be marked go.

And, Madam President, Calendar page 18, Calendar 239, Senate Bill Number 190 should be marked go at this time.

Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.