

Please Vote No on SB174

Our son has been involved in a divorce and custody battle for the last 3 ½ years in Ohio. We are the grandparents. Our granddaughter was 2 years old when this started and will soon be 6. Our family has not been allowed to meet our granddaughter or come to our home. Our experience has been nothing short of horrific. What started as a desire for a dissolution by both parties, quickly devolved into a horrific and lengthy custody battle. Our son's parental rights, which I had assumed were guaranteed in the Constitution, have been violated. He has been denied the right to see his daughter for the last 6 months entirely even though there have been several court orders for visitation. Our daughter-in-law simply refuses to follow the court orders and facilitate visitation. There has only been one monetary fine as a consequence. She has made many false allegations against our son and employed the Silver Bullet strategy for the last 3 ½ years. As a consequence, our son was required to have supervised visits. Investigation after investigation occurred and nothing was found because it was a series of lies. The end result has been that he has been denied access to his daughter or required to have supervised visitation "in the best interest of the child". This is not in our granddaughter's best interest. Children want to love and be loved by both parents. They do not choose one parent and reject another without coaching – especially when they are under 5 years old. All of his supervised visits that were allowed to happen, have had positive reports from the supervisors. Again, our daughter-in-law has completely disregarded court orders with no consequence. I assume that because she took the child and moved in with her parents, she became the parent in charge.

A custody evaluation was completed and very expensive, I might add. The recommendations were not followed. Over 15 different supervisors and all available agencies in the area were used for my son's supervised visits. All have been dismissed by the court as a "distraction" or voluntarily withdrew from the case because our daughter-in-law complained about each and every one, harassed them and intimidated some of them by threatening their license. A bystander once reported her for abusing a supervisor in the center parking lot. Why? Because this supervisor was making visits happen with our son. Most recently, the court appointed a supervisor that was completely unqualified at our daughter-in-law's request. He is not a social worker. Needless to say, no visits are happening.

Because the last three- and one-half years have been agonizing for our family, I have spent much time educating myself on what would help others going through this unfortunate circumstance.

- Shared parenting should be an assumption at the start unless one parent proves unfit. By choosing a custodial parent (or whatever name you want to call it) the court sets up an adversarial situation which is not in the best interest of the child.
- Our Constitution designates rights to parents. Courts should not be allowed to take those away without proof. In this case, there is not proof because allegations were false. A fit and healthy parent has been denied a relationship with his daughter. More

importantly, our granddaughter has been denied the love of a fit and capable parent and an extended family that has much love to give her. Preponderance of the evidence as the standard has been ineffective and harmful to this family's relationships.

- The Silver Bullet Strategy was used by our daughter-in-law to control the narrative, alienate our son and his daughter, and make a nonstop list of false allegations. She also made false allegations against us and many of the supervisors. She has attempted to smear his name. In spite of no evidence, our son seems to be assumed to be guilty because he can't prove a negative. I was shocked when I discovered that he has no right to due process in a divorce. Again, his rights are violated. People are gaming a system. Preponderance of the evidence is falsely used to deny parenting time. This has not been in the best interest of our granddaughter. When one parent attempts to erase the other parent from a child's life, call it what it is – child abuse.
- Family Court, in our experience, does not have the resources to deal with emotional and psychological abuse. It has occurred continuously at the hands of our daughter-in-law and does not seem to be recognized or stopped.

Things I think may have helped our case and our granddaughter:

1. Presumption of shared parenting unless one parent proves themselves unfit.
2. Immediate (within days not months) consequences for violations of court orders. Three Strikes: fine, fine, jail time. We are now on 7 months since trial with no decision. This is unconscionable and does nothing but escalate the problems.
3. Consequences for perjury. Lies ruin lives. False allegations ruin a child's relationships, the most important thing to a developing child. Manipulating a child in this way can set them up for a lifetime of problems. In our experience, Family Court was completely ineffective in dealing with this. Because the standard is Preponderance of the evidence, false allegations work to gain the upper hand. This is not justice. Silver Bullet as a legal strategy to win, ruins a child's relationships and trust. Its use should be punished.
4. Court officials need more training to be able to recognize emotional/psychological abuse. I have 42 years of teaching experience behind me, a Master's Degree in Education, a Certificate in Educational Administration and currently serve on our School Board. I have been appalled at how inadequate our court system is for children and their families. It seems to escalate the problems rather than solve them. The children are the victims.

I'd be very happy to discuss with anyone how our situation could be prevented for families in the future. I believe that the system is badly broken and I respect that it is recognized and changes need to be made. I do not believe that SB 174 will make those changes and may, in some ways, make it worse. Simply starting with a shared parenting assumption, allowing parents their rights, punishing perjury, requiring judges to make quick decisions and not push things months down the road, requiring time to be given back to targeted parents that they lose

due to false allegations, would all go a long way to making life better for children in this unfortunate situation.

I submit this with the utmost respect for the difficult work that you do. Thank you for taking the time to listen.