



**SB 216**  
**Opponent Testimony**  
**China Krys Darrington**  
**Director of Advocacy & Public Policy**  
**Thrive Peer Recovery Services**  
**Feb 7, 2022**

Dear Chairman Manning, Vice-Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer opponent testimony for SB 216.

I am China Darrington and I am the Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for Thrive Peer Recovery Services. We are an organization which partners someone with lived experience with a mental health or substance use disorder, with someone currently experiencing those challenges to provide support, information and connections to services and resources that can reduce barriers and help someone successfully navigate those systems.

This legislation is relevant to us because these issues frequently occur to someone who is a parent and sometimes child-welfare involvement is one of those systems we help inform, support and assist in navigating. We understand that the vast majority of parents we work with are loving and caring and want the best for their children and families. They see the benefit in working with us to address these disorders and become safe, strong families of connection. This legislation would interrupt a families ability to stay connected and would exacerbate isolation and would deteriorate motivation needed to make the changes needed in one's recovery.

In my work supporting parents involved in the child welfare system, I worked with pregnant women and parents with young children. They were always motivated to change and do the hard work necessary to regain custody of their children by having access to them. I saw first hand that when addiction is present, being prevented from staying connected with their children pushes them further into the complex isolation of addiction and further into active use. I saw children experiencing unnecessary trauma being disconnected from their primary parent and

eroding the natural bond that develops as a part of child development. In my work in child welfare through the [Birth & Foster Parent Partnership](#), we saw innovative ways birthparents and foster caregivers could work together to create a working partnership which reduced those children's negative experiences of being in out-of-home care.

Please do not pass legislation as a reaction to one, horribly tragic incident, but rather support the work and systems needed for the majority of families to be able to utilize any time involved in the child-welfare system to improve their connection and strength of their families. We want safe children and strong families, but this legislation doesn't not create that. This legislation is unnecessarily rigid for most families. Yet would affect them if substance use disorder is present.

If passed, this legislation would enforce a separation of child to parent in the key stage of bonding and development for that child. It would separate families unnecessarily and put conditions of compliance not appropriate for most people who are involved in the system. It would create conditions that an overburdened child-welfare system cannot successfully connect, such as finding a residential placement for treatment for a parent who does not meet that ASAM level of care requirement. And it would traumatize families unnecessarily when many are actively working with their caseworkers and providers to take steps to improve the strength of their ability to be a safe parent.

We oppose SB 216 strongly. Thank you for hearing my testimony and I urge you not to move this legislation forward.

Sincerely,

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