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My name is John Kelley. I am a commissioner on the Commission on Child Protection.

I am here today to discuss with you a bill that in the grand scheme of the political landscape, may not seem to rate as a priority. Constituents don't flock to their phones or computers or post office to let you know what they think about the quality and effectiveness of the legal representation the state provides to the children and families DCF summons to court about child abuse and neglect. I'm here to talk about a bill, however, that will aid immeasurably poor children and their families. Senate Bill 1269 will give these children and their families the advocacy that many of us take for granted.

In thinking about these children I am going to ask you to think about those you love. What if those children you love were suddenly removed, by the state, and sent into homes and communities that were foreign to them? I want you to ask yourself some questions. What do you want for them? Is it a good and caring social worker? The answer is yes. Is it a loving foster home? The answer is yes. Is it a strong advocate who makes sure that they get both? Only you can provide that answer.

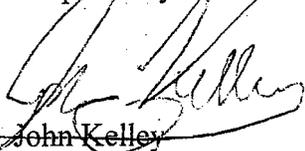
Only you can ensure that by providing an adequate income to the lawyers for these children and families they have the time and energy to properly prepare their cases. If you allow them to spend the time and attention each case requires by affording them a reasonable hourly rate and a manageable case load, they will be able to inform the judge about the needs of their clients and the facts of the case.

By making sure that the voiceless and the powerless have an advocate that provides them some control over their lives you are giving these children and families something they rarely have. You are giving them hope. You are delivering to these children from broken homes and with uncertain futures the chance to dream of a better life.

Think back to your childhood. Reminisce about the adults in your life that made a difference. How would you compensate them? How would you thank them for who you are today?

An attorney who shows their child clients and their often young, poor parent clients, that their case matters, that they have rights and that their voice counts, can make such a difference in the lives of the children our system seeks to protect. By fairly compensating those who advocate for those who most need you, you will show that you care about them. Please provide justice. Please work to pass SB 1269.

Respectfully Submitted,



John Kelley

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