

137

Human Services Committee

Proposed SB #137 An act to establish a task force on Grandparents rights for visitation.

Carmen Olga Watson/ grandmother.

5 Hubbard Run Drive

Glastonbury, CT

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I would like to thank the Human Services Committee and Senator Maryann Handley, of Glastonbury, for holding this hearing. As a resident of Glastonbury and a grieving mother, I appreciate anything that can be done on behalf of Grandparents and Grandchildren.

My daughter was first diagnosed with leukemia in 2000. She was an employee of DCF and, in 2004, had a child after a relationship with her supervisor, a manager at that agency. She and the child's father co-parented their son.

In March of 2007, when my daughter relapsed of leukemia. My husband and I immediately relocated to her home in Glastonbury where we not only cared for her but, helped out with and, cared for her three and a half year old son/my grandson. My daughter, having gone through treatment for leukemia in 2000 knew the physical and emotional challenges she faced.

On November 21, 2007, the day my 34 year old daughter passed away, my grandson suffered a blow of damaging proportion. My daughter previously had a bone marrow transplant. Even though her chances of survival were 5 to 10%, she decided to take her chances with the treatment. She often told us and her doctors that she did this only for her son. She feared leaving him behind.

My husband and I had a beautiful loving relationship with our grandson. We were at the hospital to welcome him to the world. We would come to Glastonbury and stay with both my daughter and my grandson four months out of the year. During that period, we would take our grandson for walks, sledding, haircuts, donuts, swimming and go on vacation together – all the traditional things that loving grandparents do.

It would put a smile on my daughter face to see the emotional attachment that her son and we shared together. She would comment about the strong bond we cherished with her son. She wanted us to have life-long ties with her son; same as she had with her grandparents. She would take her son to visit his great grandmother every Sunday – they would have supper there.

Research shows that losing a parent is the number one cause of stress for children. Losing a grandparent is the number 5 cause of stress for children. After three years in my grandson's life, upon losing his mother, my grandson lost his "pa," and to a great extent his "honey"/me.

Shortly after my daughter's passing, I told the dad, I wanted to preserve the relationship I had with my grandson; that I was willing to take care of him either after, before or instead of daycare. The dad told me that my grandson, "does not need to be mothered."

I have been repeatedly told by my grandson's father that he DOES NOT have to commit to visits between me and my four year old grandson.

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In 2008, we purchased my daughter's condo in Glastonbury in hopes of continuing our loving relationship with our grandson. I was able to see my grandson for 16 ½ hours, always closely supervised by his dad, at his home.

The visits are supervised at the dad's house. When I do get to see my grandson he cries when I am ready to leave and it breaks my heart because I cannot tell him when I will be able to see him again. I sense a great deal of emotional stress on his part. He will ask me to please stay a little bit longer; he will take off my shoes; he tells me that I am not going to see him for a long time; he has told me that his dad has told him that he will never, never be able to go to his mom's house. I am paralyzed after hearing his words. I feel that visits with my grandson would help reduce any emotional harm or suffering that he may experience.

My grandson's formative years are at stake. I want to continue to be a part of my grandson's childhood. To walk away from my grandson's life, **which is what his dad wants, and the CT state law expects me to do, would be to diminish the meaning of my daughter's life -** I have a moral obligation to them.

The time being wasted by taking my case to court puts me at a disadvantage with the dad. It has made the dad more determined to deny me access – because the law allows for it. Meanwhile my grandson suffers the loss of the love, care and support of his maternal grandparents. I am not interested in custody or control over my grandson's life. I just want to reasonably visit with him.

Parents and grandchildren in Connecticut need a viable solution that would work in the "best interest of the child." The law in Connecticut is assuming that the surviving parent(s) is acting in the child's best interest. But in my grandson's case, his voice and his concerns are not being heard by his dad. He has no rights and neither do I, his grandmother. My daughter's death should not grant the father the right to sever a positive and loving relationship.

My grandson should have the right to have his maternal grandparents in his life – it is what his mother, my daughter wanted and what my grandson, her son deserves. Nature took his mom away from him but the State of Connecticut should not prevent his maternal grandparents from reasonable visitation with him.

Next time you visit with your grandchild, if just for one moment, can you think of my 4 yr old grandson, who has lost his mom, his "pa," and to a great extent his grandmother/me.

You can help, please act to begin the process to give grandparents reasonable access to their grandchildren.

Only my grandson knows what it feels like not to have all the people that love him in his life.