

Committee for Children  
Hearing: February 5, 2009  
Re: SB174

Abigail True  
4 Doris Street  
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My name is Abigail True, and I urge you to recommend Senate Bill 174. This Bill is about responsibility, accountability and consequences. Each person is responsible for his choices and the owner of the consequences of those same choices. Under the current conditions of Termination of Parental Rights, all obligation, authority, responsibility and relationship with a child is severed. I truly understand the importance of each parent's role in a child's life, but when one parent's behavior and abusiveness necessitates Termination, then although all other relationship and authority should properly cease the obligation to financially support that child should continue in full force and effect.

Yes, I know there are means of accomplishing the same basic thing, but without termination everything is temporary and subject to new rulings. Supervised visitation is unregulated and subject to several very flawed practices. Children participating meet not only their own parent at this place but wait in the same room with other parents whose behavior ranges from drug abuse to incest. Why should these children be put at risk to be seen and known to such individuals.

The criteria for termination involves gaining a recommendation from DCF. Personally, I had to prove I could be fiscally responsible without reliance on state aid or the recommendation would have been to not permit termination. So, it's okay to put poor kids at risk? Why should the state pay the expenses for children whose parents have brutalized them? Why not terminate the evil doers rights but not their obligation to pay. Why should a person who beats, abuses or worse rapes a child be permitted to fiscally rape that victim. This is a grave injustice in the system one for which I have suffered, my children have suffered, and the taxpayers suffer.

I didn't marry a drug addict or apparently violent man. He was a man whose aspiration was to become a Pastor – who claimed to embrace the values of Christianity and Scripture. What happened in my home and to me and my children happens to many other intelligent, educated woman and their children every day My children suffered in ways that I can barely speak of and for which I will forever feel the burden of not having left soon enough. Here is what I have learned.

The courts are a great place to preserve rights and to protect the presumption of innocence....a great principle upon which our society is based, but for me and my children it became the abuser's enabler. For years I fought to protect my children from my ex-husband, and what I couldn't prove in a court did not change the truth. It took a

different victim and several years. Even while he was under indictment, the courts granted him supervised visitation. Repeatedly my children were left alone with him by those who were to be supervising. When he was finally convicted of his crimes and sentenced to prison, I took that opportunity to ensure my children's safety by petitioning the court to terminate his parental rights. Who among you wouldn't pay any amount to save your child? Who wouldn't pay any ransom for their safety? For me the ransom was forgoing all rights to child support....yes, I know in prison a person earns no money therefore he has none to pay...but sentences are all too short and parole all too quick...my question to the court then and is to you today, why should one whose behavior jeopardizes the safety of a child they brought into this world, whose criminal behavior and choices put those, they are morally obligated to protect, at risk, why should they be relieved of the responsibility to pay? The course of No Visitation rights can be overturned by a sympathetic judge, as I found out, for me the only safe course to protect my kids was full termination.

I cannot change this injustice for my kids, but perhaps for another we can. My kids have been supported by me in a decent standard, but in no way the standard to which I desired. Things like piano lessons, baseball, football, lacrosse, basketball, guitar, voice, the list goes on were only allowed by the sacrifice of other valuable things. I know every family picks and chooses, but we were limited without cause. Had my ex paid the child support lost in termination, my savings account would have continued to grow from the \$18,000 I had laid aside for my children's education instead of being lost to survival. My kids are smart, mostly well adjusted, and have character. Our home motto is "It is not the challenges you face, but the choices you make that determine who you are." My kids will be fine despite everything, but there are those out there who cannot do what I did. Those, for whom, the loss of income would cause greater stress. Should those children continue to be put at risk? Why should crime pay? Why should the innocents and the victims suffer more than they already have? Why should the system in which we rely for justice, create such an injustice to the victims when it is not necessary?

This Bill if passed would go a long way in correcting the injustices heaped upon the victims of domestic violence. I am not suggesting that voluntary termination for purpose of adoption should be impacted....only when the termination results from abuse. I urge you to consider this Bill and to vote appropriately recommending this Bill become a law.