

I want to thank the Committee on Children for raising HB5313.

After reading HB5313, I feel it needs to be improved on the grounds that it, like the existing law, sets the bar too high when the terms "parent like" relationship and "harm" are used.

Many grandparents find themselves in a "parent-like" circumstance despite their wishes. However, the majority of grandparents just want to be grandparents; they do not want custody; do not want to be involved in daily parent to child decisions; do not want to determine what school grandchildren go to or what clothes they wear. Simply put, they do not want to be parents all over again.

In my case, I lost my daughter and my grandson lost his mother. Prior to my daughter's death, I had a *significant, mutually loving and caring relationship with my grandson*. The three and half year bond that existed with my grandson was terminated by the father; when my daughter died of leukemia in 2007. My daughter and the father were never married, never lived together, but shared joint custody of their son.

Before my daughter had her bone marrow transplant, she told her son's dad that she wanted to be assured, that is she did not survive, their son/my grandson would remain a part of our lives. The dad said, "of course." When my daughter asked him to put it in writing, he said it was not necessary. She was ill and tired and took him at his word.

In 2009, after months of trying to work things out with the dad, I took my case to Family Court in hopes of obtaining reasonable visits with my grandson. The judge stated the following in her Memorandum of Decision:

And I quote "the allegations clearly set forth what is apparently a delightful relationship between grandmother and grandson: however, it is questionable that it meets the parent-like standard." Furthermore she stated "there were no facts that were construed as compliance with the harm requirement." The motion to dismiss (which is what the dad requested) was granted!

That decision, took away my grandson's rights and link to his maternal grandparents and his entire maternal family. After the loss of his mom, I can't imagine the decision being in the best interest of my now five year old grandson. Research clearly indicates that the death of a parent is the number one cause of stress in children, the loss of a grandparent is the fifth.

How is HB5313 different than the current law?

HB 5313, I feel, should at least consider that when a parent dies, that whatever the existing relationship was at the time of death, with the family of the deceased, that that relationship should be encouraged to continue. To arbitrarily cease a preexisting relationship between grandchild and the grandparent only exacerbates the impact on a child's emotional and psychological well being.

CT needs a statute that addresses the Death of a Parent. We need a statute that does not require the grandparent to show "harm" or "parent like relationship." We are grandparents looking to reclaim the nourishing, loving relationship we once shared with our grandchild.

My daughter died believing her son would still have the comfort of her parents and her family. She was betrayed. I can't even talk to my grandson on the phone.