

S. B. No. 844 FOSTER PARENT BILL OF RIGHTS  
Testimony of Tracey Diglio-Nylen  
Foster Parent

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Tracey Diglio-Nylen . I am a foster parent from Derby. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the foster parents bill of rights. My partner, Gerald, and I were licensed from the Milford office of the Department of Children and Families in June of 2009. When we first became licensed, we provided respite care for several families before accepting our placement of our 2-year-old twin girls. They came into our care on 9/09/09 at 11-months-old. They are now an integral part of our family and sisters to my almost 15-year old daughter, whom I adopted from Cambodia when she was 18-months old. Although they are foster children currently, our hope is to adopt them. The twins have enriched our family and have brought tremendous joy to us and to our extended families as well. We love them with all our heart.

Being foster parents is a wonderful way in which to make a positive difference in a child's life. It is extremely rewarding to know you have impacted a child's life for the good. However, the process can be very frustrating and complicated, especially as you progress through the timeline of placement to the terminating of the parent's rights. As we continue through this confusing, contradictory process we have reached out to support groups and also to other foster parents that we went through our training with. It seems to be the consensus that foster parents are the ones that take care of the children , bring them to the doctors appointments, wake up in the middle of the night to hold them after a bad dream, wipe their tears away and loving them every single day like they are your own. Yet, when decisions are made on their behalf regarding their future, we seem to have very little say, and when we take part in the court proceedings, (that is, if you are lucky enough to be notified of them), it seems as though we are like ghosts, not to even have our names used, accept to be referred to as FOSTER PARENTS. Little regard is paid to us, and our presence is not usually even required or allowed in the court room as the future of *our children* is determined.

We are comparatively new to this foster care system, but I feel in the relatively short time that we have been involved, I believe changes need to be made on behalf of foster parents with regard to opening up the communication lines between the department and the families so as to better ensure that the foster parents are kept up to speed with the circumstances surrounding their children. The foster parents are the ones that need to prepare and/or console the children in difficult and confusing scenarios. We are the ones that these children go home with every day and night, and they look to us for comfort, security and well-being. How are foster parents able to give reassurance to children when they are frightened and their security is being threatened when we are not even aware of it ourselves.

The common denominator amongst foster parents that I have either talked with or listened to is frustration, lack of respect, feelings of helplessness, due to the fact that much information is either overlooked or intentionally left out for many reasons when children are placed. Also, as situations arise with certain placements, and parents need answers or guidance to assist with their dilemmas, the information is difficult to acquire and the help is not exactly forthcoming. It is my feeling that if the feedback I have witnessed first-hand continues, I'm afraid it will prevent foster parents from renewing their licenses and thereby leaving so many children without safe, stable families to be a part of.

We believe strongly in this bill and it is our hope that it will receive ample consideration and become part of the change that we so need in order to continue taking care of the most innocent and fragile part of our society.