

1 TO: THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT - JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
2 SENATOR ERIC COLEMAN, REPRESENTATIVE GERALD FOX AND MEMBERS OF THE
3 JUDICAIRY COMMITTEE

4
5 FROM: PETER T. SZYMONIK
6 BERLIN, CT

7
8 DATE: 03 APRIL 2013

9 RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL 6685
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11 Good afternoon, my name is Peter Szymonik and I live in Berlin, CT. I
12 have spent most of my career working in or for the legal industry. I worked
13 for six years at the same law firm that produced Sen. Blumenthal, Justice
14 Bright, Supreme Court Justice McLachlan, and Chief State Justice Rogers.

15 I am an expert in legal operations; business process improvement and
16 legal spend management. I currently work as an executive at a major
17 healthcare company. I am Polish immigrant whose family came to this country,
18 worked very hard, and placed family and education first. I am a father of
19 two wonderful young boys, one with special needs.

20 I am here today in support of Bills 6685, 6688 and 1155, because I and
21 my family have suffered tremendously from the inherent dysfunction in our
22 state's family court system. Like many others, I have been financially and
23 otherwise devastated, solely to protect the best interests of my sons, and my
24 ability to be an equal parent and father for them.

25 I am speaking here on behalf of many family law attorneys I have come
26 to know who are also struggling and quitting the practice of family law,
27 given their dismay of what our state's family courts have become and the
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1 devastation they have seen it cause to countless parents, children and
2 families.

3 I am here today because I know the answer to Sen. Doyle's question of
4 why there has been an explosion of Pro Se litigants in our family courts and
5 why the waits for hearing times have approached four to five months.

6 The crisis in our state family court mirrors what is also happening in
7 New York, New Jersey, Maine, and Ohio - other states where family court
8 systems have been allowed to operate with impunity, in an ineffective manner,
9 and without any system of checks and balances.

10 Most notably - how the court system engages, yet does not monitor or
11 oversee the actions or performance of AMCs, GALs, and other court appointed
12 "experts" and as judges routinely outsource their judicial authority to them.

13 Independent contractors who are allowed to bill parents extraordinary
14 sums of money for services they do not perform, or perform poorly, or with
15 bias to whichever party pays them more, and as basic human, civil and
16 parental rights are trampled - as well as internationally recognized rights
17 of a child.

18 As one example of the dysfunction - do any of you believe that forcing
19 a parent to liquidate a child's college funds under the threat of
20 imprisonment, funds which took years to amass, and funneling the money to an
21 unethical AMC or GAL, represents an action in the best interests of a child?

22 This happened to me, my family and my sons. This happens in our family
23 court system, each and every day. Judges also require that AMCs and GALs be
24 paid even ahead of child support. Does this make sense given that most AMCs
25 and GALS spent almost no time with the children they allege to represent?

26 Imagine the impact this has on the faith parents, citizens and
27 taxpayers have in our state judiciary - to do the right thing and to act in a
28 proper, moral and ethical manner. Imagine if all of the money you had worked

1 hard to save for your children was taken from you in an instant in this
2 manner.

3 Yet, not every state has this issue or problem - with the notable
4 difference that their AMCs and GALs are monitored and do not report to the
5 judiciary.

6 With the notable exception that in those states the court's discretion
7 has been moderated and shared parenting is a standard and a norm - rather
8 than something which divorced parents are forced to fight for to the point of
9 being permanently financially devastated, which is the norm in the State of
10 Connecticut.

11 Our state can and must be far better in the actual best interests of
12 our children, parents, grandparents and families. Our state can and must be
13 far better for our citizens and taxpayers.

14 Bill 6685, moves our state one step in the right direction - and
15 mirrors what is already law in Arizona, and is now being considered in at
16 least six other states.

17 What is missing in Bill 6685, as a further clause which would further
18 reinforce its intent, by mandated sanctions against parents who knowingly
19 make false representations to the court as part of any parenting related
20 motion.

21 Bill 6685 must be passed, because it represents the start of
22 modernizing our state's approach to family law, in a manner that is in the
23 actual best interests of children and families, but it is just a start.

24 Thank you.
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TABLE : FAMILY CASES ADDED BY CASE TYPE FOR THE YEARS 1993-94 TO 2010-11

FAMILY	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
DISSOLUTION	13,721	14,036	13,340	13,506	13,409	13,624	14,451	13,858	14,280	13,841	13,665	13,654	13,895	13,859	13,621	13,758	14,533	14,081
LEGAL SEPARATION	223	268	243	267	261	275	301	276	284	277	236	253	205	217	256	236	258	225
ANNULMENT	38	33	46	63	76	47	61	56	51	56	56	62	84	56	59	68	90	75
CHANGE OF NAME	34	40	70	63	86	103	86	85	58	78	63	31	45	53	45	30	26	30
CUSTODY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	60	1,710	1,864	1,976	2,188	2,138	2,322	2,605	2,912	3,115	3,386
DISSOLUTION-CIVIL UNIONS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	32	46	50	54	48
RELIEF FROM PHYS. ABUSE	5,147	5,450	5,289	5,256	5,328	5,502	5,538	6,002	5,981	6,694	7,374	7,811	8,475	8,479	8,145	8,514	9,211	9,219
FOREIGN JUDGMENTS	124	162	126	158	142	150	160	146	153	156	152	153	139	149	132	154	149	129
VISITATION	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	427	449	423	423	379	360	395	425	502	628
UNIFORM CHILD CUST JURIS	27	26	17	23	35	41	41	56	22	21	10	27	17	26	29	32	25	31
PAT ACK WITH SUP AGREEMENT	4,095	4,605	3,996	4,512	4,618	9,681	1,657	271	270	204	127	142	10	41	48	39	27	18
PATERNITY PETITION	3,062	4,022	4,777	4,939	4,001	4,130	2,719	2,328	2,006	1,970	1,618	1,783	1,629	1,754	1,713	1,591	1,522	1,720
SUPPORT PETITION	1,506	1,872	1,739	1,950	1,797	2,082	3,529	4,445	4,955	4,844	4,424	5,008	5,083	5,285	5,488	5,241	5,070	5,204
AGREEMENT TO SUPPORT	235	301	202	181	156	140	208	210	170	130	125	129	128	136	123	140	76	58
ALL OTHER	693	799	958	1,070	1,327	1,606	1,809	2,004	241	159	147	220	138	102	105	78	72	75
TOTAL FAMILY	28,905	31,614	30,803	31,988	31,236	37,381	30,560	29,812	30,608	30,743	30,396	31,884	32,377	32,871	32,810	33,268	34,730	34,927

Divorce / Custody Cases in Connecticut

State of CT Family Court System

Judge
(Many formerly GALs)

Attorneys

Plaintiff's Counsel
\$200-\$300/hour

Defendant's Counsel
\$200-\$300/hour

Guardian ad Litem
for the Minor Child(ren)
\$250-\$300/hour

Mental Health Professionals

Therapist for Plaintiff
\$125-\$200/hour

Therapist for Defendant
\$125-\$200/hour

Co-Parenting Therapist
\$150-250/hour

Therapist for the
Minor Child(ren)
\$150-\$250/hour

Parents & Children

Mother

Father

Child(ren)

Health Insurers

Mother's Insurance Carrier

Father's Insurance Carrier

