

Testimony of David Kelman  
In FAVOR of SB494  
For Judiciary Committee Public Hearing  
March 31, 2014

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am a divorced father of two children now ages 18 and 20 who now attend college. My children were ages 5 and 7 when I was first separated. A guardian ad litem was assigned to our case early on. I don't know why. I did not request. My ex-wife made claims of child abuse on two separate occasions. The Department of Children and Families found nothing to substantiate her claims both times. Neither the State of Connecticut nor anyone else ever explained to me why a GAL was assigned to our case

I am a business professional with a Masters degree in Business Administration. I feel I have a good understanding what is fair and reasonable. When my children were young, I was involved in their lives and paid my child support obligation in full and on time weekly.

I support Senate Bill 494, An Act Concerning Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for Minor Children in Family Relations Matters.

I feel Connecticut's Family Court and Guardian ad Litem systems are broken. The state court system is financially and emotionally devastating parents and families already suffering from a divorce. It has been my experience the system did not work in the "best interests" of my children. Immediate action and reform is needed now - we must do much better for families and children of divorce.

Years ago I filed a motion for counseling with my children. My ex-wife testified against it. The Guardian ad Litem assigned to our case also testified against it. Sadly, the Judge rubber stamped the Guardian ad Litem's position and denied my motion. I simply sought a better relationship with my children after they had been alienated by my ex-wife, who attempted to put me at the margin of their lives. Our children suffered terribly. Our children were denied the mental health counseling they deserved. I was shocked that the Court system did nothing to aid our family when I as a parent sought assistance to improve matters for our children.

I believe in part the motion was denied because the Guardian ad Litem failed to take the appropriate action, which would have been to engage the assistance of a qualified mental health professional to help evaluate the situation and determine if our children would benefit from counseling with me.

The Guardian ad Litem in our case provided a disservice to our children and, ultimately, hurt our family, while being paid a great deal of money. Our children have suffered a terribly loss. They missed out on the counseling they needed. I fear they may have relationship issues throughout their lives, despite my best efforts to seek them qualified mental health assistance. In my opinion, the Guardian ad Litem failed to really consider the best interests of our children, especially when I, as their father, expressed my concern for them and sought the proper help.

My children are grown now and I will not benefit from any family court or GAL reform the legislature may take, but I do hope families who face divorce in the future will benefit from an improved family court and GAL system. I urge all Committee members to vote in FAVOR of SB494.

Thank you for your kind attention to this very important matter.

Respectfully,

David Kelman  
West Hartford, CT

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