

John DiBiase Jr.
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Ct. Judiciary Committee

Re: Testimony in support of SB 494,
HB 6685 for shared parenting and HB 5524 for alimony reform

Dear Honorable members of the Judiciary Committee: I can't help feeling that it was hypocritical for GAL to be appointed Chair of the GAL Task Force and a conflict of interests.

About 2004 attorney Sharon Wicks Dornfeld was appointed my son's AMC/GAL. In my first and only meeting with her after her appointment, Attorney Dornfeld commented to me that because I was fighting for my right to sole custody of my son, who I was his primary care giver for the first three years of his life, the most informative years of a child's development, she stated to me that I had self-serving interests. My only interest is and was the Best interest of my son. She also criticized my activism against Family Court Abuses and denied of me my rights as a person with disabilities. My responsibility as a parent is to teach my child about Life and that includes to teach him about civics and how and why it's important to fight against social injustices. In my first meeting with her at her office in Danbury, she threatened me that if I didn't give up fighting for the custody of my son that she would see to it that I wouldn't be able to file another motion in court. She followed up with that threat and filed a motion in Danbury Superior Court to keep me from filing any more motions without the permission of the court. Her motion was approved. When I tried to file motions to get permission to file some motions, I was denied by the court. My ex-wife made it very difficult for me to have a meaningful relationship with my son over the 15 years my ex-wife had custody. My son's GAL psychiatrist Dr. Cohen even stated in his report that he felt my son's mother wasn't always acting in our son's best interest. Because of my disability it was impossible for me to represent myself. I was appointed a GAL but I didn't feel he was acting in neither my son's or my best interests. GAL attorney Dornfeld repeatedly used my disability as an excuse to keep me from getting custody of my son. He was being fully supported by Social Security Disability benefits. My experience with Danbury Superior court Judges and GALs has been very humiliating and distrustful. I felt I was being treated fairly as a self-representing party.

Another serious problem with Family Courts is the lack of enforcement of a non-residential parent's parenting time court orders.

- There is nothing in this bill which provides the public information on what AMC/GALs are paid, how much time they actually spend with children, or if they are doing what they have been assigned to do.
- There is no requirement that the Office of the Public Defender post a list of the graduates of the GAL/AMC program who will work for a \$500 retainer and \$50 per hour--which would be the state contractor rate for indigent families.
- S.B. 494 contains no standard or a written Code of Ethics for GALs/AMCs with an enforcement sanction for misrepresentation of a child's right of Informed consent.
- S.B. 494 does not offer any kind of independent oversight over AMC/GALs are a way for parents to file a complaint outside of the Judiciary or attorney-controlled Statewide Grievance Committee.
- S.B. 494 contains no defined set of responsibilities for a GAL such as issuing a report on an evaluation of the sixteen factors--it leaves that up to "judicial discretion"--which we have seen leads to no uniform standards like "automatic orders" entered at the time of the divorce is commenced.
- S.B. 494 makes no changes in the Rules of Professional Conduct for attorneys appointed by the court or the Connecticut PB Rules which would conflict with the legislative language.
- S.B. 494 eliminates the invasion of 529 plans---but in no way does it limit the amount of money which can be ordered from an IRA which has tax consequences.
- S.B. 494 does not limit or cap AMC/GAL fees.

What we Parents NEED and are ASKING for, in part:

- Independent oversight over AMC/GALS, no outsourcing of judicial authority to them
- A presumption of Shared Parenting and equal access, absent clear abuse and neglect
- Legislation that does NOT assign privilege or parental rights to AMC/GALS absent clear neglect and abuse
- Caps on what these AMC/GALS are paid (flat rates! Not hourly billing)

Yours Truly,
Alienated Parent
Victim of Family Court and GAL Abuses

John DiBiase Jr.