

Testimony of Kaylah Culp  
**Raised Bill 494**  
**An Act Concerning Guardians ad Litem and Attorneys**  
**For Minor Children in Family Relations Matters.**  
Judiciary Committee  
March 31, 2014

My name is Kaylah W. Culp. I am a resident of the state of Connecticut who was involved with the Guardian ad Litem system. I am here today to comment on Raised Bill 494. **I respectfully request that the Judiciary Committee revise Raised Bill No. 494 before favorably reporting on it for the following reasons.**

I support much of Raised Bill 494. However, Section 4 (NEW) raises concerns about the bill as drafted.

Section 4 states a parent, guardian, or party involved can seek removal of the court appointed guardian ad litem. Fourteen years ago when my sister and I were appointed a guardian ad litem, we were glad there was no chance she could be removed. We finally had a voice! Our parents went through a sticky divorce which was the result alcohol abuse. Visitation was always a touchy subject, we of course wanted to see and spend time with my dad, but as the days turned into nights, the drinking got heavier. We wanted to see my dad on the weekends, but did not want to stay overnight. Some of the situations we were put in were reckless and scary, and at 11 years old, was not something I wanted to take part in. All of the instances happened in the evening, hence the desire to come home at night.

The court battle between my mom and dad was intense. My mom was trying to convey the situation to the judge, but wasn't allowed to speak for us. ~~My dad was then saying my mom was lying,~~ and nothing she said was true. He was also blaming her as the reason my sister and I did not want to see him. It was a back and forth, he said, she said disaster! With the different stories, the court appointed my sister and me a guardian ad litem, and both lawyers/parties agreed. At first, we were confused when my mom explained this to us. Someone we get to talk to in private? We get to tell our side of the story? Finally, the judge would hear our side, by an unbiased third party. Our guardian ad litem met with us, went to the hearings and represented us, which gave the judge a much clearer picture of what was going, and how to move forward.

I am by no means trying to bash my family or especially my dad, but this is the story of how things went. My sister and I felt truly blessed to have a guardian ad litem appointed so we had a

chance to be heard. My dad ultimately passed away from the alcohol, but if he had lived, he would potentially be one of the parents blaming the guardian ad litem system, when what happened was a result of the disease and the behavior associated with it. Also, if he had the option, as presented in Section 4 (NEW), he would have sought to have the guardian ad litem removed once he saw the direction things were going in.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to comment on Raised Bill No. 494, and for allowing me to tell my story. I hope this sheds some light on a side of the guardian ad litem process you may not see too often. **I respectfully requests that the Judiciary Committee consider redrafting the bill to address the concerns I have raised before favorable reporting on it.**

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.