

1 TO: THE STATE OF CT - EXECUTIVE AND LEADERSHIP NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

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3 FROM: PETER T. SZYMONIK

4 GLASTONBURY, CT

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6 DATE: 10 FEBRUARY 2015

7 RE: REAPPOINTMENT OF DCF COMMISSIONER JOETTE KATZ

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9 My name is Peter Szymonik, I am a Polish immigrant and I and my family
10 members have lived and worked in Connecticut most of our lives. I have spent
11 most of my career working in or for the legal industry. I worked for many
12 years at the same prestigious law firm which produced Senator Blumenthal,
13 Justice Bright, former Supreme Court Justice McLachlan and Chief State
14 Justice Chase Rogers. Our law firm prided and distinguished itself by
15 requiring the highest possible level of ethical standards and professional
16 behavior from its partners, attorneys and staff.

17 Over the course of my career, I have worked with literally hundreds of
18 law firms and attorneys. I sat on and chaired many local and national legal
19 industry committees. I am an expert in legal operations; corporate legal
20 bill audit and review, legal spend management and business process
21 improvement.

22 I respectfully submit to the Executive and Leadership Committee my
23 testimony in opposition of the reappointment of Department of Children and
24 Families Commissioner Joette Katz for the reasons stated as follows. Most
25 notably, Ms. Katz has failed to operate her agency in a manner which reflects
26 the best interests of children, families, society, and the public first. Ms.
27 Katz continues to run a horribly bloated and misguided state agency which
28 believes and operates on the notion that the state and DCF are better

1 parents, than parents are. Ms. Katz runs a state agency which knowingly
2 manufactures evidence against proper and fit parents in order to take their
3 children from them without any cause or grounds in order to "provide
4 services", which in most cases cause far more harm than any good. Ms. Katz
5 continues to run an agency which seeks to zealously "obtain oversight" over
6 children using federal and state dollars in a manner which blatantly tramples
7 parental rights and ignores the basic concepts of due process, equal
8 protection, common sense, and fairness.

9 I, my sons (one with autism) and my family have suffered tremendously
10 due to the failures of the agency over the course of now three
11 "investigations" the department has conducted in my sons' and their situation
12 since 2008.

13 Each time, the department has failed to respond to or address obvious
14 and fully independently documented, verified and reporting abuse and neglect
15 of my sons. Instead, the department opted to target my young sons for
16 services while attempting to find fault with me and my family. This in what
17 amounted to an Orwellian nightmare as the department manufactured
18 substantiations against us without any basis in fact or evidence, but solely
19 on a misguided social worker's conjecture.

20 In 2008, DCF substantiated a claim of physical abuse against my elderly
21 Polish mother. This based solely on nothing more than false claims made
22 against my mother by my former wife. This in spite of ample evidence before
23 DCF that what my elderly mother was accused of could not possibly have
24 happened, and evidence in DCF's own file pointing to the fact that my former
25 wife had a history of manufacturing false claims.

26 My mother is a wonderful Polish mother and grandmother who lived
27 through the horrors of the Second World War. She escaped communism and came
28 to the country not speaking a word of English. She and my father worked

1 extremely hard placing family education first. When her husband died
2 unexpectedly, she was left with no income of any kind and two sons still in
3 college. With no work experience of any kind, she literally talked her way
4 into a job at the Newington's Children's Hospital. She worked there for 12
5 years helping children and where she was loved by the entire staff before she
6 retired, in part, because she started to suffer from severe arthritis.

7 My elderly Polish mother helped me raise my sons after I went through a
8 very difficult divorce which left me financially and otherwise devastated.
9 She visited with her grandsons almost every day while I looked for a new job.
10 My sons love their grandmother and my mother would rather die than harm them
11 in any way. DCF, did not care. They targeted a 74-year old grandmother in
12 order to "deploy services." They substantiated physical abuse based her
13 based on nothing more than a completely baseless lie.

14 Coupled with the horrific problems in our state's family court system,
15 my young sons were prevented from seeing both of their loving grandparents
16 for so long that thy thought their grandparents had died and were calling
17 them from heaven. No one at DCF cared about the trauma this was causing or
18 showed any concern for this. Their job was done and the file was closed.

19 Months later, a DCF social worker testified under oath that my mother
20 posed no threat to my sons and that the one and only source of the
21 allegations made against her, came from my vengeful former wife. What
22 corrective action was taken by the department? None.

23 To this day, my mother remains substantiated in DCF's file in spite of
24 countless letters and emails I have written to the department asking that
25 this be corrected - even to the Commissioner's Office. Yet the department
26 has refused to correct its' error "because the file is closed." DCF has
27 wiped their hands clean of the trauma they unnecessarily caused my mother,
28 who they falsely accused and targeted.

1 To this day and at the age of 81, my mother has no recourse available to her
2 to correct the injustice that was done to her. My mother lived through the
3 horror so of the Nazis and then Stalin. She was in a state of complete
4 disbelief and shock at what DCF did to her, her son, and her grandsons. She
5 did not know this was even possible in the United States of America. This is
6 not why she came to this country.

7 Six years later, and under Ms. Katz watch, not much has changed at DCF.

8 In 2012, DCF was again engaged with my family and my sons. This time
9 they investigated what should have a clear cut case of abuse of a child.
10 This has my former wife brought our then seven year old son to a police
11 station in order to have him arrested or taken away for a psych exam for
12 misbehaving on a restaurant. All of this captured on police station
13 surveillance video. A video which shows my former wife yanking our son out
14 of his car seat as he screams and pleads with her to stop. A video which
15 shows her dragging our son across the police station parking lot and up a
16 flight of stairs, as our son with autism is wandering around, not knowing
17 what to do. A video which shows seven police officers with guns yelling at
18 and traumatizing my sons, not realizing that the mother was the problem or
19 questioning why a mother would bring her own children to a police station.

20 In spite of all of the evidence showing that my sons had no history of
21 any kind, they never had any problems in school, and did not suffer from any
22 of the behaviors or conditions their mother was accusing them of, DCF again
23 attempted to force services onto my sons, without my knowledge or involvement
24 as their custodial father.

25 They attempted to enroll my seven (7) year old son into IICAPS, a
26 program for troubled teenagers who had already been in trouble with drugs or
27 the law. A child --- who had no history of any kind. DCF attempted to
28 enroll him into this program he didn't qualify for, making him belief

1 something was wrong with him. Perpetuating the very same emotional abuse his
2 troubled mother engaged in when dragged him to the police station. I
3 explained to DCF that I spoke with the Juvenile Court - and the prosecutor
4 had never heard of a seven year old child being cited by the police. The
5 Prosecutor's Office was in disbelief and agreed that my young son should not
6 be unnecessarily exposed to the court system. Instead of appreciating that I
7 kept my seven year son out of the court as a responsible parent and father,
8 the DCF social worker targeted me and labelled me as being "angry" and
9 "aggressive."

10 For years, my son could not go to the bathroom with the door closed or
11 be on a separate floor of our home because of DCF and the police did to him.
12 No one at DCF ever explained why they targeted my son or tried to force
13 services for him which he did not qualify for or need.

14 Two years later, DCF received no fewer than four independent mandated
15 reports filed against my sons' troubled mother by their medical providers and
16 school system. No one responded to my concern that the social worker who
17 botched the prior investigation was assigned to "investigate" these reports.

18 Not a single report was filed against me, so DCF opted to manufacture
19 one, again solely based on false claims manufactured by my former wife.

20 During the entire course of the six-month long "investigation", the DCF
21 social worker met with me once. When I expressed my concerns, I was
22 repeatedly told to contact the head of the Manchester office, which I did
23 repeatedly. Not a single person called me back or showed any regard for my
24 concerns. I later discovered that this was due to the head of the office
25 being replaced at least three times.

26 In December, DCF substantiated emotional and educational neglect
27 against my former wife, but inexplicably not medical neglect, in spite of the
28 medical neglect reports they received. And yet without a single report

1 against me from any independent medical provider or the school system, DCF
2 also opted to find me in "emotional neglect" in order to "obtain oversight of
3 my sons" - a direct quote from the DCF Ombudsman, who completely ignored all
4 of the due process and lack of evidence concerns I raised to him.

5 It is February 2015, and to this day, and in spite of repeated
6 requests, DCF has yet to provide me with a complete copy of my case file or a
7 single piece of documentation or evidence supporting their claim and finding
8 against me - this as the department has already started Juvenile Court
9 proceedings against me, forcing me to hire an attorney, and forcing me to
10 take time from work to defend myself against.

11 As a loving, caring, responsible and proper parent - DCF targeted me in
12 to trample my parental rights and as the department believes it can better
13 provide for my sons' than I can and have. When my sons live in a nice home
14 in a wonderful town and in a great neighborhood. They get great grades in
15 school and have not once been late for school when with me in six years and I
16 fully support their school system. Their medical needs are being taken care
17 of by me. They attend Boys Scouts and have many friends. They have a
18 wonderful extended family with me that loves them.

19 When my sons themselves are sick and tired of all of the people who
20 have come into their lives claiming that they are there to "help them", then
21 do not. When they are forced to be made to believe that there is something
22 wrong with them, and there is not. When they are forced to see what their
23 father and family members have been burdened with and forced to suffer due to
24 the department's failings. This is the true definition of the word
25 "abusive."

26 This same scenario is being played out across the state and to
27 thousands of parents, families and children - due to the operational
28 dysfunction at DCF. For these and other reasons, Ms. Katz should not remain

1 at the head of DCF. For signing the Juvenile Court filing against me based
2 on glaring falsehoods, Ms. Katz should not remain as the head of DCF.

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Peter T. Szymonik

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