

Testimonial of Christopher Olsen regarding S.B. No. 319 AN ACT CONCERNING NOTIFICATION TO SCHOOLS OF PROTECTIVE ORDERS OR RESTRAINING ORDERS AFFECTING STUDENTS.

Thank you for your time in considering this matter.

As a retired state trooper, with approx. 9 years of that time as a School Resource Officer, and currently a Director of Safety and Security for a school district of approximately 2500 students I have a fear of an injury or death to a child as a result of custodial incident happening with a student that could have been prevented through a simple notification.

Too many times we as a school system have run into issues with parents/guardians of current students, these issues stem from court orders of custody, Protective Orders and/or Restraining Orders in which our current students are the subject of. Many times we are unaware of court orders of custody or protection. We are responsible for interpreting the orders if it pertains to custody agreements and also trying to mediate a Protective Order or Restraining Order between the involved parties. We currently rely on the parents to notify the school in a timely manner which is not always the case. Often times we are notified of a court order at the moment of crisis and then the schools are left to navigate through the intentions of the respective orders, usually in the presence of the protected child further causing distress and impacting the mental health of the child. The following are a few examples of issues we have recently run across:

- A. Incidents relative to educational meetings in which both parents have educational guardianship rights but one or both parents are the subject of a Protective or Restraining Order amongst the adults.
- B. Incidents trying to determine who has custody on a particular day and whether that custody starts at the school or at a bus stop.
- C. A grandparent picking up a child at the request of one parent and the other biological parent also tries to pick up the child. Police needed to mediate issue as well as quell verbal argument.
- D. Student health in question between both parents with equal custody, but disagreement over whether child should attend school. No clear authority in court order.
- E. One that we have dealt with on several occasions, is a parent arrives to pick up child and other parent then calls, or calls just prior to arrival, stating there is a custody agreement in place and that we are not to release the child, but we do not have record of it.

With rumors of an E-Notification system possibly in development, I would ask that schools be included in the consideration of this matter.

I would ask that the courts provide limited and simplistic, but direct information relative to order issued by the courts directly to the school district of the child in which the protection and safety of said child is the focus. This could be similar to current law, C.G.S. 10-233h, Arrested Students. Reports by Police, Disclosure, Confidentiality.

The safety of children should be paramount in this consideration and I would ask that a pro-active approach be taken in preventing both physical and mental harm regarding custody issues. I would also ask that you look at the multitude of issues schools face regarding custody issues and court orders of protection relative to children. Often times, children are caught in the middle of custody battles and are used in a manner not conducive to the health and well-being of the child. Please don't let another child get hurt as a result of a custodial disagreement.

Thank you again for your consideration in this matter.

Christopher M. Olsen