

My name is Teri Lucille Cahoon also known as Yaki Cahoon. I'm a legal resident of South Windsor and a member of Connecticut Protective Moms. As a Protective Mother trying to keep myself and my 3 children safe from continued abuse, I am testifying in favor of Jennifer's Law SB 1060.

Since 2016 when I was thrown out of my home and refused access to my own children, I've accumulated more than \$50,000 worth of debt related to someone else's choice to divorce and my having to fight judicial abuse from the state of Virginia. My move to CT in September 2019 was a direct response to suffering parental alienation.

The abuse started much earlier though, noticed in 2014 when my biological daughter was born to me only a year after my 2 Foster sons were adopted. I support Jennifer's law, because I see coercive control as a major problem in LGBTQ families. The time and the money that it takes to grow a family without the heteronormative advantages produces far more conversation, planning, and verbal contract that is often ignored by court systems still functioning on antiquated family structure ideals. In my case, not only was the option of divorce repeatedly spoken against, every detail was agreed upon as to who would work for income, that I was the primary caregiver, how the children would be educated, and that the children would always have us in a 2 parent home. These details were solidified multiple times through the course of five years including the very moment I inseminated my own body to reproduce my own flesh and blood.

The Coercive Control I and my children suffered included financial abuse during the years that I was refused any education while the other adult in the home paid off the 1st masters degree, obtained a second master's degree, and started a 3rd. I was a full time parent for many years; therefore a financial dependent. Yet the expectation of recovery after forced separation was equal to that of the head of household. Full time parents often endure isolation, and mine was worsened by an out-of-state move that gave advantage to spousal abandonment as my survival began before the new state had legal jurisdiction so that I could seek no council. My financial disadvantage and child loss traumas before the relationship were used to manipulate me to sign so the other party could sell the marital home so that I had nowhere to return to when thrown out. After the move, verbal abuse grew more obvious in that I was refused permission to make friends common to the other party, but that followed many years of sexual and personality degradation; public praise but private disapproval of my domestic gifts; criticism of my culture, intelligence, and religion; and mocking any attempts I might take to protect my children in a court of law, saying she would win everything if I even tried. The later began at least four years before I was abandoned. When I sought an attorney to get help, physical abuse against my daughter began which escalated to sexual abuse allegations confirmed in 2019 by CT Dept of Family Services. Coercive control is when someone uses strategic various behaviours [and past traumas] to create dependency (all fulltime parents are dependents) and control of another person (financially, socially, emotionally, vocationally, even spiritually) The coercively controlling person creates a false world of confusion, fear, and contradiction (I existed this way for more than four years). Over time, coercively controlling behaviour erodes the other person's sense of self and their confidence

Due to the extreme results of this coercive control, I have not been able to raise enough money to redeem my daughter out of that environment.

I believe Jennifer's law would have helped me had the judge overseeing the case complied with laws fighting back against coercive control. This proposed legislation is needed for LGBTQ families who are thrown into a heteronormative system that isn't working and does not recognise the intense methods and agreements made to begin and continue a family. Please take note that many of the countries and States having already appropriately enacted such legislature are countries and States that already have progressive LGBTQ standards; England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Canada, Taiwan, Hawaii, California, and now France have set a precedent for inclusion that this state should follow. Our families are not made by accident, not made the same way, and they should be protected not ignored and abused. The other States that have introduced these laws are States that were early to recognize LGBTQ marriage and other defensive legislation, so Connecticut should already be on that list.

"I ask that you favorably report Jennifers' Law 1060 out of committee so that the General Assembly can keep Domestic Violence Victims and their children safe while in broken-family court proceedings. We need to protect mothers and children from the same tragic and preventable fate of Jennifer Dulos, Jennifer Magnano and baby Aayden Moreno. Thank you for your consideration.

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