

Members

TESTIMONY FOR PUBLIC HEARING

The Task Force to Study Legal Disputes Involving the Care & Custody of Minor Children
Connecticut Legislature
c/o Legislative Judiciary Committee Office
Legislative Office Building/Office 2500
Hartford, CT 06106

Thursday, January 9, 2014

Dear Task Force Members:

I have been in the family court system since July 2011. I am submitting this testimony anonymously because I will be in the family court system for the next year or more as I am hoping for a change in custody. I've been discriminated and retaliated against for speaking up and retaliation is a reality.

My GAL fees for my divorce were approximately \$20,000. Post-divorce the bill is about \$17,000 to date. For that, the GAL has met with my 2 young (ages 6 and 5 now) children on 2 occasions for one hour each. The GAL has NEVER spoken with teachers or other school administrators. The children's therapist was spoken to on 2 occasions for less than 30 minutes each. The current bill includes fees to draft and file her contempt motions for non-payment. For full disclosure I have been paying her what I can afford monthly. My ex has not paid a dime. I have spent my life savings on legal fees and yet have virtually no more time with my children then I did 14 months ago when my divorce was finalized (every other weekend, and 2 hours each on Tuesday and Thursdays. The bulk of my parenting time during the week is spent driving them to and from my home as my ex will not do any of the transportation).

The bulk of the bill is court appearances and correspondence with my former husband. During a 2 month period this summer when my ex made false allegations against my boyfriend of sexual abuse against our daughter, the GAL billed my ex and I for 12 hours even though the 12 hours on the bill clearly indicates it was all my ex - 'email with Mr. X, phone call with Mr. X, and related calls with police, DCF, etc. Why I am responsible for 50% of the bill when the bulk of the bill is generated by recurring false allegations?

My ex made 3 false claims to DCF in as many months, each escalating in severity, and each unsubstantiated by DCF and police. The DCF reports even concluded that my children were coached, yet my ex has suffered no consequences - not even a verbal admonishment. The GAL has used words like 'psycho' and '(mentally) decomposing' to describe my ex, yet he still has primary custody because I WORK. This is not all due to inaction on the GAL, although the lack of action has not helped. We have been on the 2nd floor of the Bridgeport courthouse more times than I care to count. Even when I have valid contempt issues (like during the sexual abuse investigation, against police and DCF instruction, my ex prevented me from seeing my children for nearly a month) there has been no progress. All that happens each time is we meet with a case worker from Family Relations, try to come to a resolution, spend all day in court, rack up more legal bills, then my ex simply says 'No deal'; we head to case flow and a date is scheduled for the issues to be heard by a judge. These dates have only been met with delay after delay at the last minute. Then its another 4-6 week wait to get back on the docket. This is how the entire process has been for the last 14 months.

My children cry when its time to go back to their father. They have told the GAL about their father's abusive behavior, which includes being hit in the head. My son is having documented behavioral issues in school. My son just asked me "how many more days mommy until we live with you again?" My daughter marks the days she sees me on a calendar. How do I explain this process to a 5 and 6 year old?

The court would rather see the children with a parent than a caregiver, which is who they would be with after school for 3 hours if they lived with me. The fact that the court would prefer the children be with a parent with criminal charges of stalking and harassment against the mother, who uses false claims to DCF as a means to hold the children hostage, will subject his 4 year old daughter to a sexual physical exam instead of a parent with no criminal record, a solid job in finance, and who has not been called a 'psycho' by the very person charged with looking out for their best interests is a disgrace.

ANONYMOUS, Fairfield, CT