

TESTIMONY BY KELLY A. KEREKES, JANUARY 9, 2014, HARTFORD, CT
RESIDENT OF STAMFORD, CT

I firmly believe CT should have a presumption of shared custody.

I grew up without a father and I will never know him. But it was his choice. It's almost easier to accept that it was his decision rather than a decision made by some Judge. Many children as you know do not have relationships with their fathers (and some mothers) due to parental alienation or the ruling of a biased Judge. It is not in the best interest of a child to grow up without a father, believe me I speak from experience. It is a basic human right for a child to see both parents equally if indeed both parents want to make that commitment. My partner went through an excruciating custody battle involving a Gal, family relations case worker, the usual protocol. And guess what? They both recommended 50/50 custody when his daughter turns 5 but the judge threw out that ultra important provision. They also recommended 5 nights on a 14-night period and his daughter only got 4. No future provisions. All decided behind closed doors. Tell me, what is the point of this whole process if in the end a judge takes their recommendations and flushes them down the toilet? Aren't they the 'experts'? A full week goes by every other week where this little girl doesn't see her father and this is unacceptable. He is an exemplary father and she and him have a relationship that demands the utmost respect, it's beautiful and touching, I sometimes can't believe how lucky she is to have a daddy as incredible as he is and I am in awe of their love. I wish to God I had that with my father and to think a court controls their little time together is reprehensible and absurd. And then there are the countless family members of children doomed to 1 or 2 days a week with the non-custodial parent, what about them? Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins; the decisions the court makes have a broad effect on so many others as well.

As we all know we are not living in the 1950s and our laws have not changed much to reflect modern times. Clearly, we do not live in a world where mothers are the primary care giver and the fathers primary role is to be the provider and spend a few hours here and there with the kids. I truly feel there would be much less acrimony if a 50/50 presumption of custody is established. The fact is that if a mother doesn't want the father involved she can make it extremely difficult for him to be a part of that child's life because the court more times than not grants the mother primary custody. We live in Connecticut, our laws should better reflect the progressive society we are a part of - yet it is a biased and antiquated system that needs a major overhaul. Fathers are guilty until proven innocent in the family court system, God forbid you actually love and care about your child and want to be a good parent! The way the system is set up almost makes you feel weird for wanting it, like it's wrong and looked down upon, you're constantly under a microscope for wanting to be a father.

I understand this is big business but please try to look at this as humanely as possible and make the right decision for the children of Connecticut. Children need stable relationships with their mother and father if we want a better future. Fact.