

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF EQUAL SHARED PARENTING 50/50 PROPOSED PA HB 1397**

Pamela Lewis  
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November 25, 2019

**To the Honorable Members of the House Judiciary subcommittee on Family Law in Pennsylvania:**

**Representative Sheryl Delozier, Majority Chair**

**Representative Tina Davis, Minority Chair**

**Representative Jerry Knowles**

**Representative Jonathan Hershey**

**Representative Paul Schemel**

**Representative Summer Lee**

Hello. My name is Pam Lewis. I am an alienated mother of two children. On the day of this hearing, December 9, 2019, I will have not seen or spoken with my 17-year old twins in 949 days. That is over 2 ½ years.

I fully support representative Sue Helm's proposed PA HB 1397, pertaining to a presumptive 50/50 custody rebuttal, in absence of proven abuse, criminal history or domestic violence and I ask that you do the same. I am in favor of 50/50 equality for parents. Children have the right to love and be loved by both parents.

I simply wanted a divorce. Unfortunately I didn't know how things would turn out and how broken the family court system truly is. Because my husband refused to leave the house or discuss our options, I temporarily left the house on April 24, 2017 to seek counsel in regards to filing for a divorce. Two weeks had gone by and my husband called every day as usual asking me if I was coming home. On Friday May 6, 2017, He asked if I would be paying for the mortgage. When I stated he would be responsible for paying for half of the household expenses, he said, "You will be sorry". Later that day I was served PFA papers claiming that I allegedly abused him and our children for years. My ex-husband intentionally did this to keep me away from our children as a way of seeking revenge for leaving him.

On that day May 6, I never could imagine the long road that I would endure. I was not allowed to see my children or go to my own residence having a sheriff escort me to get my clothes. I had to pay spousal and child support while he lived in the house and he still did not pay the

mortgage for 5 months causing us to go to court to force the sale of the house before it went to foreclosure.

We then went to court for child custody. I thought we would be going to work on a shared custody agreement. The judge was given a letter from my son which he read before the proceedings started. My lawyer and I did not even get to see it until after the hearing. He then took my children behind closed doors and spoke with them for over an hour. He came out and I was told that both my children reported abuse over several years. I was asked a few questions. Even though there were no police reports, emergency room records or any reports or concerns prior to these allegations, my ex husband was granted sole and legal custody of our children. I was told the children were 14 years and could make their own decision who they wanted to live with.

I was beyond words. I went to court thinking family court would be fair and put the best interest of our children first. Why would I not be granted shared custody or shared legal custody? Why would I not even be given the option of supervised visitation? I have no criminal record. I am the one who asked that the children get counseling and to this day my son never went. If I was such a danger to our children, why did my husband not call children services or leave the house? I am the one who left and it took him two weeks to file a report after I left. If this alleged abuse happened why didn't he do anything sooner? Why didn't he even think to seek counseling for the children during these proceedings? Going through a divorce and separation is hard enough for children to endure. If they were allegedly abused, you would think they would need to talk to someone. Even the school has no record or mention of abuse reported to them.

I really thought that the judge in family law would have experience in circumstances such as these false allegations and be able to look at the facts and be objective. I received our custody papers in the mail. The children were ordered to get counseling and talk to me twice a week. This was never enforced. Why didn't the judge request a follow up hearing to get an update?

I have been blocked from social media; I try to text or call my children and their voice messages are full and they have blocked my number from their cell phones. I have sent letters to my ex-husband and left messages with no reply. I still don't understand how I pay child support yet he doesn't have to provide me updates or information about our children. I have to find out they went to the doctors by invoices I receive in the mail as I pay for their health insurance.

My entire family has also been erased from their lives. A once close relationship with their grandmother has now been severed. My son's last words to his grandmother were, "There was a line drawn in the sand Nana and you chose the wrong side". What child says that?

Recently, when requesting a transcript of my custody hearing, I was contacted and said the Judge would not allow me to have the transcripts even though I should have a right to know exactly what I was accused of. I never was given an explanation or letter in the mail explaining why my request was denied.

I have missed out on so many important milestones that I will never get back with my children. I no longer know their likes, dislikes, if they are dating, or what they want to be when they grow up. My son was recently in a car accident and my ex-husband didn't even contact me. I had to find out from a third party. This just doesn't seem right to me nor should it be acceptable.

Family court has ruined my family's lives and is ruining millions of families across the United States, including Pennsylvania. The damage has been done, as Family Court aided in the alienation process of my children, didn't even provide alternatives, and refused to follow the law. Please note I am a working nurse and have no criminal record and possess all my PA Clearances. I was a nurturing, devoted and loving mother.

Everyone makes mistakes in life, but that doesn't mean they have to pay for them the rest of their life. Sometimes good people make bad choices; it doesn't mean they are bad, it means they are human. Children need to know they have another parent who loves them, other family who love them and want to be a part of their lives. Family law should encourage communication, and allow both parents to raise their children equally. If one parent refuses to follow the law, they should have consequences that are enforced by family court.

I know I am just one voice. There are no words for what it feels like to live each day not knowing where your child is and if they are doing ok. So many parents should not have to endure chronic grief and mourn the loss of a child who is still alive. So many children should not have to miss out on having both parents in their lives. I appreciate you taking the time to hear my story.

I hope that you would consider making a difference that will impact so many lives for the better. People and laws won't change without your support and approval of this bill. We need to see a change.

Respectfully submitted and testified,

*Pamela A. Lewis*

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