

November 10, 2021

Chairman – Minority Chair – and other distinguished Representatives

Good afternoon

I come before you today, as neither a politician nor an advocate.

In the grand scheme of it all I am of no importance at all to most of you.

However, I come before you as someone who has been deeply affected by the failures of the family court system, someone who along with my family has seen our lives flipped upside down in the most unimaginable way.

Someone, now forced to search life for the “new normal” following the brutal murder of her 7-year-old niece at the hands of her own biological father.

I come here as an aunt, who desperately misses her niece.

I come here in place of my sister, Kathryn Sherlock, who could not be here today, as she is celebrating the birth of her 2nd daughter,

A daughter who will only know her big sister through stories and photographs and a few random Facebook videos.

I stand here as someone who firmly believes that had Kayden’s law been in effect 4 years ago, I would not be here at all, and I would not have to be living this new normal nightmare of a life and I would still have my niece here with us, where she should be, making makeup tutorials and playing with her brothers and newborn sister.

However, this law did not exist then, and instead my niece is 6 feet under the ground in a tiny casket.

Caskets should never have to be made to fit a child’s body. But as of today, there are over 800 more caskets that have been made for children, due to the failures of family court. My niece was the 647th child to be killed by a parent that the court system failed to protect even after warnings and red flags were given and documented court appointed evaluations by professionals were ignored. And in 3 short years that number has grown to over 800 kids and continues to grow. Pennsylvania alone had a 43% increase of child fatality in 2020. Personally 1 is too many, yet we are at over 800 kids, and nothing has been done...until now. If Kayden’s law saves just one child’s life, isn’t it worth passing? It is my belief that this law can and will save hundreds of children’s lives. To err on the side of caution, something the judge in my niece’s case failed to do is a no brainer to me. This law is set up to put the child’s right to live and right be protected first and foremost. It is not to take a child away from a safe and fit parent. In my opinion, this law will not affect those who are good, safe, and fit parents. If you are a good parent, you will have nothing to worry about. But it will take the ability away from the unsafe and dangerous parents to continue their abuse, whether it be physical, sexual, or even mental. Those who oppose this law, it really makes me question what they are so worried about and what their motives are. Kayden’s law will protect children from their abusers. If you aren’t the abuser, again you have nothing to worry about with this law.

One of my favorite quotes comes from Benjamin Franklin, "justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are". Sadly, I admit, I was one of the unaffected before August 6, 2018. And luckily most of you in this room have not been affected by such a tragedy. And I truly pray you never have to live this nightmare. But now I have been affected and we are begging you to help us, bring justice to my niece, and all the other children who were failed by family court. The loss of my niece didn't just affect my family. It crumbled an entire community. It shattered the lives of thousands of people, from strangers across the country, to the little girls that said goodbye to her should have been sitting. Kayden's best friend, who still refuses to have birthday parties again because without her best friend it seems pointless. To that friend's mother who must raise her child with a forever broken heart, unable to fully explain the evils in this world at such a young age. The monster who killed my niece, shattered so many lives, all of which could have been preventable had this law been in place. So, I ask you, when voting on whether to pass Kayden's law, I hope after hearing this that you are now somewhat affected. You are now being held responsible in helping us to give these children the protection they need and deserve. I ask that you vote on this law as if it were your child, or your niece or granddaughter or your child's best friend. Consider passing Kayden's law so that the next child going through this has at least a fighting chance at survival. Please vote to pass Kayden's law, be outraged with what is currently going on in family court and vote as though you have been affected. Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Let's stop the insanity of family court and help us to bring the change that is so desperately needed. I will end this with one more thing, Libre is a dog who got a law named after him, making it illegal to leave a pet outside for longer than 30 minutes, once the weather drops below 32 degrees or higher than 90 degrees. I ask you all, why we have no problems making laws to protect animals, making animal abuse legal in every way, but when asked to protect our children, we get push back. My niece's biological father would never have been allowed to adopt a dog in this country with the way the laws have been set up to protect them, for he would have been deemed to dangerous with his background, yet he was handed a child just because it was his right as the father. Does no one see the insanity of that? It is time to do better for our children. Fortunately, Libre was saved and lives a wonderful and protected life now. There are 800 plus children that do not get say the same, but with the passing of Kayden's law, our children will be given the protection they deserve.

Thank you,

Heather Giglio