

Fran Lusk

From: Stacy Crow <godsgifts12@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 12:01 PM
To: Fran Lusk
Subject: Re: House Bill 2700

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To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address the hearing today about House Bill No. 2700.

I am the adoptive mom of eight children and am currently fostering two children in DCF custody. Looking at all sides of the bill; I can see where we need to address the bonding and attachment of children to their foster parents. It is heartbreaking to watch a child be taken from the only people they have known. But, the bigger question though should be! Why are they the only people they have known? Bonds and attachments for children are created by the time spent with them. When a kinship/relative is only given a one or two hour visit a month, it is difficult to establish the attachments that this bill talks about.

We brought our son Ricky home on November 4, 2015 and finalized his adoption of June 14, 2016. On November 17, 2016 Ricky's birth parents gave birth to a baby boy, William. We weren't notified and it took several calls into the agency and DCF to let them know we would be placement for Ricky's full biological baby brother. After many calls, pleas and emails we were only allowed to travel from Goodland to Hutchinson once a month, for a one hour visit with Ricky's baby brother, William. We took full advantage of this time for three months and then the agency and DCF decided to terminate the visits. They had other plans for this baby which was for the foster family to adopt. We were willing to be his placement, we were considered kinship as Ricky and William were full biological siblings, we were qualified, we were approved, we were willing to work reunification, we were willing to be an adoptive resource but the agency and DCF stood in the way. There was no support of kinship relationship of these two brothers while William was in foster care. We had to go all the way to the governor's office to finally allow these two brothers a life together. For that we are forever grateful but it should have never been that difficult. House Bill No. 2700 would have completely kept two brothers from ever getting to grow up together. William deserved to have his family; he deserved to grow up knowing his brother and knowing his biological connections.

Kinship in some areas of our state requires the judge or guardian ad litem's approval to even be allowed to have placement of their biological family member. So, the family not only goes through the agency and DCF's qualifications and approval which can take months. Then the judge and GAL decide if they think the family should be approved.

Child welfare is not meant to be an adoption agency but one that we are trying to preserve the family unit whether that is to the parents or another relative. Adoption at times is a part of this and we need to be finding relative/kinship at the beginning of the case so we don't have to address the bonds and

attachments at the end of the case. When no family/kinship steps up or aren't able to care for a child than the long term foster family should be given full preference for adoption.

Thank you for taking the time today to invest in the lives of children. I do ask you to please look at all sides.

Stacy Crow