

I remember getting a terrified and hysterical call from my sister telling me the twins had been taken from her at their home. This is where the nightmare for our family started. For my sister and her girls, calling it a nightmare doesn't even begin to describe what they went through.

My nieces were very much loved and still are. They always had shelter, food, clothes, supervision, family involvement, extracurricular activities, a network of friends, family friends, and vacations. Sometimes when you are looking at a family from the outside they look very normal. Then you find out later that the kids were being beaten, sexually abused, starved, etc. We know that many abusers can look like a pillar of the community. So you would assume that something horrible was going on in the home of my sister that justified the immediate emergency removal of her children, but there wasn't. No one was being abused sexually, verbally, physically, emotionally, or psychologically.

No family is perfect. My sister did make mistakes as we all have. None of her mistakes justified the trauma and slander CPS put her through. Her mistakes did not justify the damaging forced separation from of her children from their family. This isn't an isolated incident either. The fact that I am writing this at all as testimony for a bill being presented to the senate shows that the problem with CPS is a widespread issue. The only reason you don't hear more about it is because it's easy to keep people quiet when they have been shamed so badly that they no longer have the courage to stand up for their rights. It's even easier to control someone if they fear that noncompliance will put their loved ones in danger. It's become a known fact that the chances of a child being abused increases when they are placed in a foster home. **As if separation wasn't bad enough the family has to go through the horrors of wondering if their child is safe from harm knowing that chances are they are not.**

When my sister showed me the CPS report of the investigation it was atrocious. They put so many lies, fabrications, and exaggerations in it the judge was convinced she was a horrible person without her ever getting a chance to speak about her side. Even if she did speak there was no way she could even begin to tackle everything in the report.

The main reason my sister had her kids removed is because of false allegations by an informer who acted like she was her friend. Her friend would offer to watch the girls and my sister was happy for the help and returned to pick her girls up a couple hours later. Then that fake friend would turn around and tell CPS that she had abandoned them there. This is just one example of what a false reporter says. One of the staggering things about this person reporting false allegations and CPS is that after the kids were removed (on a Friday evening so no government agencies are open on the weekend to do anything about it) none of the family was allowed to have the kids or see them until they all had all been investigated as a safe person, but....**they let that person (nonfamily) who made all the false allegations go to the foster home and pick up the girls for the evening without out conducting a background report, before their own family was allowed to even know where the girls were located, and before the family was allowed to see and visit the girls.**

One of the things of many false accusations was claiming my sister had a convicted sex offender at her house. This was also false. The person who CPS claimed was a convicted sex offender has never been a sex offender. His ex-wife had remarried. His daughter reported her stepfather had sexually abused her. The stepfather was convicted and sentenced for the crime. It wasn't the person that CPS claimed in my sister's report and a chance was never given to dispute it.

Our mother was eventually cleared to have the girls. Like I said in the beginning of this testimony, our mother was and is a great parent and provides a safe home. We always knew our mom would stand

behind us and empowered us to the right to protect ourselves. She never called us any names other than the one we were given when we were born. Even calling someone dumb or stupid was strictly forbidden. Our mom and dad never argued with each other. They had discussions behind closed doors. We never even knew our parents had problems while we were growing up. They didn't share adult discussions with children or let them overhear. We didn't have extended family in the area but we often visited them out of state. It was this visit with relatives that CPS caused even more pain and suffering on our entire family.

We had a trip planned for over a year to go visit family out of state. When that time came my sister came with us like she always does. CPS didn't like that she didn't ask them permission first of if she could go. Then they decided our mother should have been aware that my sister didn't have permission to go with us. **CPS decided that our mother was easily manipulated by my sister and for that they came and forcefully removed the kids again and put them in a foster home where to this day the kids won't speak of what happened to them while they were there.**

Other things I've seen CPS do to my sister and others...

- Demand drug tests but when the parent goes to take the drug test they realize CPS has given them the wrong address or the place is closed even though the parent arrived at the time CPS told them to arrive. Then CPS gives the parent an automatic positive drug test by default.
- Put the children in foster care so far away from the parent that the parent can't afford the gas to go see their own children and end up borrowing money from friends and family.
- Not answer phone calls or emails and then claim that they were never contacted
- Not include information in reports that contradict the false allegations
- Demand one parent must provide transportation to the other parents even though that other parent is abusive to them
- Not include information in their reports that show any positive traits the parent has
- Not speak English proficiently or clearly to parents
- Parents are not given adequate legal representation. They are told to sign things being told it will help them get their children back and parents are willing to do anything if it means they will get their children returned to them but then they don't get their children back and the papers they signed make it even more difficult for them while helping CPS.
- The public defender, CPS, and often the judge do not follow due process. They often do not allow the parent to ever be heard in court.
- If it looks like a parent missed a doctor appointment for their child even though it was rescheduled and not missed CPS claims medical neglect against them.

- If a parents has a load of laundry on the couch ready to be sorted CPS claims that the home was not sanitary.
- I know of one girl who lost her autistic son to CPS and she has no idea where he is.
- I know of another person who had their child removed from their home and they don't know where the child has been taken either.

Senate bill SB653 is not going to fix everything that is wrong with CPS but it will make a positive difference. By recording the communication the investigations will be more transparent with less chance of fabrications. Any group or person in a position of power that has a direct impact on some of the youngest and most vulnerable members of society must be monitored and their actions made transparent for outside review. There will always be abuse of power but to know it exists and still do nothing about it by allowing it to go unchecked is hurting the people in our communities and the children the government has sworn to help protect.

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