



CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON
FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
MULTNOMAH COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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MAUREEN McKNIGHT
JUDGE

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TESTIMONY REGARDING SB 385-A Engrossed — PARENTING TIME CONFERENCE

Before the House Judiciary Committee of the Oregon Legislature
May 9, 2019

Submitted by:
Maureen McKnight, Circuit Court Judge
Multnomah County

Chair Williamson, Vice-Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Maureen McKnight and I am a Circuit Court Judge in Multnomah County. I have served in the Family Law Department there the last 17 years after practicing family law exclusively as an attorney for 22 years. I am the immediate past Chief Judge of that department and a member of the interim workgroup on custody and parenting time issues. I speak today for myself rather than the Oregon Judicial Department.

I support SB 371.

I was aware from other judicial work of an approach by Arizona and a few other states providing a triage or preliminary inquiry into parenting time problems experienced by parents. We discussed in the interim workgroup various models and on the Senate side developed the A-engrossed approach. It envisions **an informal, non-recorded conference with a trained mediator, attorney, or court staff to identify problems, suggest trial solutions, report back progress, and if necessary, report a recommendation to the judge**. This would be a step after mediation, if mediation were unsuccessful, and an option, not a requirement, in an individual judicial district.

Often the problem isn't what the schedule is, but whether it is followed and if so, why not. The parents' effort to try a few alterations to the parenting plan or even adjust their expectations based on input from the Parenting Time Conference Officer can sometimes resolve the issue. Sometimes one session can be productive; sometimes a few check-ins on how a temporary approach is working is needed. If final agreements are reached, a stipulated order can be prepared for judicial signature. If not, the Judge would be allowed to read any recommendation from the Officer but not required to give it any specific weight and the parties would retain their right to a full enforcement or modification hearing before the court. So this would be a last-step effort to problem-solve with trained third-party on what are sometimes small, sometimes big, issues about parenting time not happening as ordered.

Not every county would implement this step but it would be an option for those with the volume or interest. If it were done in my county and were successful in even half the cases about parenting time disputes, I estimate I would gain at least 2 full work days/ month, and I am one of

10 Family Court judges.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Respectfully submitted,



MAUREEN McKNIGHT, Circuit Court Judge

cc: Members of the House Judiciary Committee
Nancy Cozine and Phil Lemman, State Court Administrator's Office
Addie Smith, Senate Judiciary Counsel