

Hello,

Below is my testimony. Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Best,

Holly

Chair Williamson, Vice Chair Gorsek, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for giving SB 318A a public hearing. My husband and I are both in support of this bill, and we reside in the district of Rep. Rick Lewis.

I wish that I was able to be there in person to testify, but as a school teacher, my 37 kids need me to show up at school. However, I did testify on SB 318 in its original form during the Senate Judiciary Committee. I highly recommend that you listen to those testimonies. I know that SB 318A was amended by the Senate, but the 30+ people that showed up to testify on 3/6/19 had a powerful story- an eerily similar story. Father after father spoke up about their heartbreak and their desire to be a father to their children, which had been confined by the family court system to "every other weekend, and a few hours during the week". And that's the problem, family law courts 1- make far too much money off of broken families, and 2- continue to uphold antiquated laws and a belief systems that mothers are the nurturers and fathers are the financial supporters. However, as we all know, family dynamics have changed dramatically over the last hundred years- parents divorce/separate at alarmingly high rates, both parents typically work as opposed to just the father, and there are an increasing number of stay-at-home dads. SB 318A is a step in the right direction for protecting children, as well as updating outdated family laws. SB 318A does two very important things:

1. It allows a Judge to grant 50/50 parenting time which is an added tool to their tool belt, and is a win for kids.
2. If a parent who wants 50/50 requests it and the Judge does not feel 50/50 is in the best interest of the children, the Judge will put into writing how that conclusion was made. Currently, Judges rely overwhelmingly on the "every other weekend, and a few hours during the week" model, and when this decision is made, a reason is not given. This leaves the parent (usually the father) without his kids, without understanding what he "did wrong", and without a roadmap to be able to work towards more time with his kids. The example I just mentioned is exactly what happened to my husband after he divorced his ex-wife. My husband asked for 50/50 time, and was the primary caregiver for a long time because his ex-wife worked long hours. However, the Judge decided to uphold the status quo and the courts awarded mom custody and gave dad "every other weekend, and a few hours during the week"- despite the Judge repeatedly saying that both parents were equal. With SB 318A his Judge would have given my husband the facts and findings as to why 50/50 time was not in the best interest of his children, which in a way, would give him hope through an roadmap on what he could do to work towards 50/50.

Although SB 318 was the goal this session, our family supports SB 318A because we know that it is a step in the right direction, and it would positively affect our family, as well as families all over Oregon.

Thank you,

Isaiah & Holly Burrell

Salem, Oregon