

Dear chair and members,

My name is Callie and I reside in Multnomah county.

When I met with investigators at the CPS office, they asked me to sign a safety plan & offered me a bus pass. I told them my son & I were homeless & needed a motel or bed in a shelter. I did not feel a bus pass was going to help much. I explained that I was not refusing to sign the safety plan, but I wanted to show it to a lawyer 1st and get legal advice before signing anything. They would not allow me a copy of it, to take a pic of it, nothing. Afterwards, they went to court and told the judge my son was in "immediate danger" because I refused to sign the safety plan. To me, it was retaliation for me using my constitutional right to legal counsel. And if it were true that my son were in danger, which he was not, how would a bus pass have made us any safer?

Furthermore, they removed my son from the babysitters residence while I was attending class at community college. No one ever informed me of the shelter hearing that was scheduled for the next morning. Nor was it on any paperwork that was left with the babysitter to give me. If I had attended that hearing, my son would have been returned to me.

When I went to family court to request they reschedule the shelter hearing and invite me, the clerk laughed at me and told me to "we cannot do that, you're here for the long haul".

I feel in order for CPS to remove a child, they should be required to have enough evidence to file charges against parents. Investigations should be done by persons who have training in law enforcement, and case management should require a bachelor's degree in a field related to their job position. Caseworkers and foster parents should be given psych evaluations to monitor for on-the-job burnout or dangerous personality traits.

Also, when I expressed concerns about childcare provider initially being used by foster mom, caseworker admitted to not doing background check, but agreed to do so. After one was completed she insisted foster mom not return my son to that provider ever and referred her to a daycare which is owned by caseworkers best friend. My son was molested there by another child in the bathroom. When I told my caseworker this, she told me I could not schedule an eval at Cares NW. When I did so anyway, she removed my child a 2nd time and threatened to terminate my rights unless I dropped out of college. The child my son said did this was another foster child, obviously not getting the support and services he needed either and probably repeating the same cycle that put him in care. CPS fails to protect.

From my experience, every decision forced upon my son and I violated our constitutional and human rights. They were not made in the best interest of my son, but more likely financial profit or powertrip.

I had met my conditions for return without the help of CPS within 2.5 months, yet it still took 53 weeks for my son to return home. My son was barely 4 yrs old when they removed him, and just a couple months into his 5th yr when he came home...critical years in bonding & development. The damage to our bond, the harm to my son, far exceeds any "help" that was inflicted upon us. All services were accessed without the help of CPS, and in some cases in opposition of CPS. I took the same parenting class four times, despite the judge not requiring me to take one, because it allowed me an additional hour and a half with my son each week. My son came home in a mental health crisis caused by their backwards recommendations, and it has been a struggle to heal ever since. Trauma that was not necessary and could have been avoided if we had been offered genuine services based on our case needs, instead of a bus pass, which was meaningless. Thank you for hearing my testimony, I hope it will help you to bring change to the system & spare other families from enduring the same nightmare.