

Testimony to Oregon State Legislators on Family Court Reform

Presented by Haley Hughes

May 20, 2025 – Salem, Oregon

Good Morning, Chairpersons and Members of the Committee,

My name is Haley Hughes. I fear retaliation and fear for my physical safety by speaking out today.

In 2018, I was awarded full legal custody of my 3 year old daughter, in an Oregon court after a comprehensive forensic evaluation found me to be a safe, stable parent—and found her father to have a documented history of abuse and mental instability. I believed, as any parent would, that the court's ruling would protect my daughter and allow us to heal.

But I was wrong.

What I did not understand then is what I now must expose today: that in Oregon—particularly Washington County—going through divorce as a protective mother is not the beginning of justice. It is the beginning of state-sanctioned post separation abuse .

My abuser—after “losing custody” (but still having nearly equal parenting time)—began a 7+ year smear campaign, weaponized the family court system with false accusations, including fraudulent CPS and police reports to take my parenting time and custody away. These lies were accepted without scrutiny by Washington County court. I have spent years in family court without any real hearing, not being allowed to present evidence, or call key expert witnesses—in 2020, my abuser only had to claim I was mentally ill and I was suddenly placed on supervised visitation for a year pending another \$15,000 forensic psychological evaluation, where I was found to still have no mental illnesses, and was only diagnosed with PTSD and legal abuse syndrome from my abuser .

Four judges and countless lawyers in Washington County have handled my case, and none of them allowed this evidence to be admitted on the record. None had legal jurisdiction to alter custody or restrict my parenting time (as neither parent had ever lived in Washington county at the time my abuser filed in this county).

Judge Kathleen Proctor gave full custody to my abuser in Oct 2021 without swearing us in, hearing evidence, or accepting this key evidence of the forensic evaluation she forced me to do if I wanted to have my parenting time reinstated . The forensic evaluation proved prolonged abuse and custodial interference from our abuser. She stated in the record that she did not read the coercive and controlling parenting order , yet she signed it and gave full custody and judicial authority to my ex husband. She simply stated if I wanted more time with my daughter, than what this current order allowed, I could refile with the courts later.

I have not had a phone call with my daughter in 4 years and am lucky if my abuser allows me to see her 2-4 days a month since 2021 . The harm caused to my daughter is irreversible, as she is nearing her 10th birthday and still has no end in sight to equal access to a meaningful relationship with her mother and siblings due to the pattern of illegal actions we have uncovered in Washington county court.

We have now found dozens of protective mothers in Washington County with nearly identical experiences—all before the same judges, parenting coordinators, and court-appointed actors—all acting outside the scope of their legal authority , and receiving federal dollars to remove our children from our custody and punish us by removing parenting time. No crime. No findings. No hearings. No due process. Just orders based on our abusers falsehoods and sealed backroom deals with Judge Reigns, Judge Fun, Judge Proctor, and Judge Bailey in Washington county court. They are doing the same illegal rulings to parents today that they did to me years ago.

Many of us have never even lived in Washington County, yet our parenting rights have been stripped without a fair hearing or opportunity to present factual evidence.

This pattern forces us into decades-long, financially devastating litigation—just to fight for equal time with our children.

This isn't just unethical—it's illegal under federal law.

These actions violate:

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42 U.S.C. § 1983, for the deprivation of our civil rights without due process;

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18 U.S.C. §§ 241 and 242, for conspiracy and deprivation of rights under color of law;

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Title II of the ADA, for denying reasonable accommodations for PTSD and Legal Abuse Syndrome;

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28 U.S.C. § 1738A (PKPA), for manipulating jurisdiction and ignoring valid custody orders;

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42 U.S.C. § 13981 (VAWA), for failing to prevent cross-jurisdictional stalking and legal harassment.

I am preparing to file my case in federal court. Not because I want to—but because the Oregon state system has failed entirely. I have exhausted all my finances within Oregon courts, only to find those courts complicit in the post separation abuse they took an oath to prevent.

I ask this legislature to take action. We need:

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A legislative inquiry into judicial misconduct and due process violations;

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A statewide audit of Title IV-D incentives and VAWA compliance;

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Mandatory domestic violence and ADA accommodations and training for all Oregon judges;

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Penalties for litigants and officers of the court who weaponize false reports;

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Restoration of constitutional protections in family law proceedings.

The courtroom should not be a punishment for protective parents who leave abusive spouses. Yet that's exactly what it has become—for me, and for many others.

Thank you for your time—and your commitment to accountability and a belief in our judicial system.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on May 19, 2025, at Seattle, Washington. Signature: Haley Hughes