

I'm a mother and a previously licensed child care provider in the state of Oregon. I immigrated to the United States from Romania with my family in search of freedom and opportunity. But what I experienced through the Oregon family court system was more horrific than I ever could have imagined.

My daughter was taken from my custody with less than two days' notice. She was forced to leave her school, her home, and the stability she had know, with no evidence of abuse or unfitness. At the time, I was in the custodial parent role and providing full-time care. Since then, I've only been allowed very minimal parenting time.

One of the most painful parts of this experience was watching my child be ripped from a stable, secure life. And much of the reasoning behind that decision was based on mischaracterizations including a court-appointed evaluator's claim that my parenting showed "anxious attachment style." That conclusion was based on cultural norms from my Romanian background, like packing my daughter's food and making sure she was dressed warmly. These are not signs of dysfunction. They are acts of care. But instead of trying to understand my culture, those actions were used against me.

Since the change in custody, there have been multiple concerns raised about her well-being in her father's home. Reports have been made to CPS and law enforcement by individuals other than myself regarding behaviors such as intimidation, fear-based tactics, boundary violations, unsafe home conditions, and emotional distress. When CPS interviewed my daughter, she shared personal information she had been told would be kept confidential. But that information was given to her father — the very thing she had expressed fear about. No action was taken to protect her.

I continue to pay both current support and arrears, including arrears that accrued during the time I was in the custodial parent role. These are being collected through wage garnishment and contribute to ongoing financial hardship. I also pay for many of her basic needs and extracurricular activities, which I do because I love her, but there is nothing equitable about this arrangement. In addition, I'm constantly being sent harassing messages by the father to bring him more money. I'm acting as the financial parent but not allowed to actually parent.

I have contacted dozens of family law attorneys over the years. Nearly all of them have told me the same thing: because the other parent won at the Oregon Supreme Court ... even though he introduced new, made-up claims at that level ... there is nothing that can be done now. I've been warned that pursuing further action could be too risky.

I have missed countless milestones in her life such as first days of school, homecoming, holidays. She's been prevented from attending many important moments with her extended family on my side, like cousins birthdays, graduations, and major family events. I've been prevented from even calling or hearing from her. Even now, with her own phone, she rarely calls when she's with her dad, because she has been conditioned over the years not to.

It's hard to understand how the same state that once licensed me to care for other people's children allows me so little time with my own. I am not free to be the mother I want to be, or the mother my child needs. This is not just my story. It reflects a broader pattern of decisions made without cultural awareness, without adequate evidence, and without regard for the long-term harm they cause.

Thank you.