

JOINT
SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE
AND
HOUSE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE
Friday, February 12, 2016

ATTACHMENT 17

02/12/16
Michelle Alden

My name is Michelle Alden, and I am a licensed professional counselor. I specialize in working with adoptive families, families with difficult and challenging children, and children who struggle with attachment and trauma related emotional and behavioral issues. I am also an adoptive mom. I adopted my 14 year old son from foster care here in Boise last year. Perhaps what has led me to this work, and created a desire to help adoptive families is that I too was adopted at the age of 6 from foster care in California. My older brother, who was to be adopted with me but was later placed with our maternal grandparents, struggled his entire life-into adulthood, with effects from our early childhood trauma, multiple placements and disruptions. Now, some forty years later, I have been reconnected with my birth family. I can honestly say that I look at adoption from all sides and I have come to appreciate the struggles my adoptive family had as well as the deep struggles and challenges our kids face everyday.

Clearly there are no easy solutions, but the research is overwhelming in how losses and lack of permanence in a child's life can and often does cause great difficulty for the child throughout childhood, adolescence and even into adulthood. One study stated that the more changes in caregivers ~~years~~ children in foster care experience the more likely they are to exhibit oppositional behavior, crying and clinging as well as reactive attachment disorder in which the child then exhibits severe disturbances in relationships with future caregivers (Gean, Gillmore & Dowler, 1985). The impact of these experiences on the development of the child can be devastating.

Former foster children are likely to have higher numbers of teen pregnancies, more marriages to spouses who failed to provide emotional support, and greater social isolation than the general population. Further findings suggest that the risks of these outcomes are reduced through a nurturing and stable foster family care experience and adoption. A stable, nurturing family environment can protect foster children against the negative effects of trauma and loss.

The importance of a child's close relationship with a caregiver cannot be overestimated. Through relationships with stable and secure caregivers, children learn to trust others, regulate their emotions and interact with the world. And it is up to the child welfare system, the policymakers, practitioners and the courts to ensure safe and stable family environments for these children even if it means changing the way things are currently being done. There will always be questions as to "what is best for a child" how we decide this needs to be reformed. I believe

changes need to be made in way these decisions are made. We are failing our most vulnerable children, and from the stories I have heard from those asking for reform, I would say we are failing our best resources for healing that these children may have—the families that are willing to adopt, who have stepped in when no one else would and who are able to meet not only the physical needs but the emotional needs for these children.

Michelle Alden, LPC, MFT

Healthy Foundations

208-860-7828

02/12/16
Stephanie Alvarez

Chairman Wood and committee,
I came to observe today's
hearing, not prepared to testify,
not thinking I had anything of
value to contribute. After listening
to several speakers, if I may add
my 2 cents to this topic.

I am retired from the United States
Air Force, with 23 years active duty
service. My husband also retired. I
chose to keep my 5 children here in
Idaho, in little Kuna, a safer place
than our last assignment near
Washington, DC. People, in general,
are much nicer here in Idaho. ☺

I want to thank you for your
service, as well.

Currently, I am a professional
counselor (LAFPT, LPC, NCC) with a
non-profit agency, Methodist Counseling
Center (MCC) in Kuna. I am in the
counseling profession now, because I
care for hurting people. I ask for Foster
Care reform in what's best for the child,
utilizing Attachment Theory, & ask for
Dept Health & Welfare rules to be reviewed. →

MISSA DO
A simstypé

Thank you for your service.

Stephanie Alvarez

- KAD (Kuna Against Drugs), President,
- Idaho Marriage & Family Counseling Association (IDAMFC), President,
- Mother of 5.
- My son-in-law, deployed for 2 years in Navy, leaving his 4 year old & 2 year old twins, he entered Idaho's Foster Care system.

From BRIAN McCauley

Mr Chairman, Members of the Committee-

02/12/16
Brian McCauley

I stand to speak today in favor of Reform to the Idaho Foster Care System which we have written with the help of Rep Moyle and Perry. This bill will not solve all the problems, but it is a start. It is the beginning of a multi-year plan we have developed to fully change and overhaul the foster care system.

I hold in my hand a portion of the compiled stories we have received in just the past 4 days.

3 Common Themes

- 1- Department Violates State and Federal Laws, we are a nation of laws, but laws are of no use if they're not enforced. This is the role of the courts and they are not doing it.
- 2- Idaho law defines how long a birth family has to qualify to have their child returned, but sets no limit on how long extended family has to qualify. This allows the Dept to pull foster children from a foster home after they have lived there for years. This is not in the child's best interest.
- 3- Department can move a foster child whenever and for whatever reason they choose. And they do. This is in clear violation of their own policy. But the Department still does it.

Our proposed legislation will

- 1) Reassert the COURTS authority to ACCEPT, REJECT, MODIFY plans to meet the child's best interest
- 2) Set a TIMEFRAME in which relatives of a foster child have priority to adopt
- 3) Protect the STABILITY OF FOSTER PLACEMENT by requiring the Department to gain approval from the court prior to removing a foster child except for reasons of immediate safety

I truly believe these solutions should be welcomed by the Department because it will allow them to. This should be collaborative

- 1) Speed up the process of PLACING KIDS IN PERMANENT HOMES
- 2) Thus LIGHTENING CASELOADS
- 3) They will be able to BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF FOSTER FAMILIES AND CHILDREN
- 4) Provide a SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR FOSTER FAMILIES

This is a win for everyone, most of all the foster children

I encourage you to hear and support our Idaho Foster Care Reform Bill

02/12/16
Valerie McCauley

Valerie McCauley, Eagle Idaho, Address foster care reform

Our goal for ~~foster~~ reform is to help change a system we have come to realize is broken. Many foster parents no longer want to participate in a system that does not support them or the children they are called to protect.

For most part,

Good foster know what they are getting into. They know that is very likely that they will have to say goodbye to a child they have cared for and loved. They also recognize that it is ~~likely~~ ^{they may} they will not be the best option for the child. But good foster parents are also wise enough to recognize when the department is motivated by something other than the best interest of the child. As we began to tell our story we realized we are not alone. One woman said it well, "there has been a crack in the dam." These past 5 days we have seen this crack grow and the eruption of stories has flooded social media.

+ We have ~~been~~ foster parents for 3 years now. Our first foster experience was rewarding. We instantly fell in love with our foster son. The case unfolded how I believe the system was intended to function. The communication was strong and focused on this little boy. He was reunited with his family and we felt privileged to have loved him. Our last case did not go as smoothly. It was far more complicated and we recognize the challenge the department must have faced, but this particular case revealed to us that there are serious problems that need to be addressed.

What FF want?

~~Foster~~ ^{They} parents want to be a part of the collaborative process to help bring about the best interests of the child. When a case is subject to judicial review there is safety. The Courts have not been allowed their lawful oversight of the Department. In order for foster parents to be a team player with the Department and the courts, they must be heard and their perspectives must matter. ~~We know~~ these children. We are the department's finest resource to help them understand the child, but the department is accustomed to shutting us out and we cannot have this if this system is to survive.

What are we asking for the Department to change? We are pleading with them to obey the laws of the State of Idaho. After our foster son was removed from our home, we instantly began to educate ourselves on the laws and the policies guiding the department and our state. We were amazed at how well these laws protected children. But these laws, in many cases, are completely ignored. We are trying to bring forth legislation that is intended to clarify the laws and provide specifics where in the past there has been ambiguity.

What do we want the department to understand about foster parents? Like any parent, foster parents feel the natural instinct to protect those in their care. We are not an institution or a business, we are loving families who don't stop doing our job of caring just because we didn't birth these children.

When our foster son was abruptly removed from our home and placed in another foster home, without any warning, after 14 months, we were in a state of shock. How could anyone believe that this was the right thing to do? To the department, it made things less complicated, to our foster son it will complicate the rest of his life.

We have no expectation that ~~these efforts will bring~~ ^{will come} our foster son back to our home. We have agonized for the suffering he has gone through and cannot change what happened to him but what is in our power is to make sure this doesn't happen to another. I spoke to a ~~woman~~ ^{former foster mom} on the phone yesterday who said, "If these changes can come, I'm coming back. I want to come back and help ~~but~~ ^{children} I've been afraid."

I plead with you to support the Idaho Foster Care Reform bill that will be coming as a first step in a long process for needed change.

02/12/16
Carly Neff

Good morning,

My name is Carly Neff. My husband Shawn and I became foster parents to 4 children in March 2015. After 14 months in care, H&W chose to place the children with their birth mother despite strong objections from us as well as the Guardian ad Litem and biological relatives including the children's father. As a licensed social worker myself, I expressed both my personal and professional concerns which were dismissed by the department. In fact, we were twice threatened to "learn our place or have the children removed from our home". In January 2016, 5 days before court, we received a phone call, which we recorded, from H&W informing us that regardless of the judge's ruling, the children would not be allowed to stay with us despite the negative consequences that decision would have on them. The department stated "we know this decision will add additional trauma to the children". Furthermore, H&W refused to provide an explanation as to why they had made that decision. At the following court proceeding, we were informed by the Guardian ad Litem that they did not support the department's decision and recommended the children stay in our home. However, H&W told the Guardian ad Litem they had 2 choices to endorse: either extended home visits or split the children up into new foster homes, essentially tying their hands. What the department has done and is continuing to do is a disgrace and is detrimental to vulnerable children. We strongly urge this committee to take action and give a voice to these children's parents - all. Thank you.

02/12/16
Lisa Nordstrom

2/12/16

COMMENT ON FOSTER CARE REFORM

I had hoped to personally convey my concerns about current child protection practices at this morning's hearing but hope you will consider legislation to improve outcomes for children in foster care.

I am not a foster parent. I am a former child protection county prosecutor and have practiced child protection Act-related cases pro bono for the last 8 years. As a volunteer attorney representing court appointed special advocates (CASA), I have personally represented ^{the interests of} more than 50 children in foster care in more than 25 cases in Ada County.

I am concerned that ^{permanent} placement decisions are made in Idaho without any opportunity for judicial review. While I generally believe social workers have good intentions and the best interests of children at heart, there have been too many troubling placements statewide to conclude that a review process is unnecessary.

Judges in Ada County have told me several times in ~~the~~ courtroom proceedings that they do not have the statutory authority to review the Department of Health and Welfare's permanent placements decisions ~~in~~ inside Idaho's boundaries.

As a legal practitioner, I find it troubling that an executive agency acts as a law unto itself without any of the checks and balances typically found in our state systems. Judicial review of in-state permanent placement decisions for foster children ensures that the State of Idaho is protecting the best interests of the children within its custody as envisioned by the Child Protection Act codified in Idaho Code Title 16.

even
(if unintentional)

Please clarify Title 16 to explicitly authorize judicial review of ^{in-state} permanent placements of foster children. No other avenue exists currently for reconsideration of the Department's decisions that can prevent additional trauma to these vulnerable children.

Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

LISA Nordstrom

Idaho State Bar # 5733

mobile: 208-344-2045

email: idahopowergirl@yahoo.com

Foster Reform JoAnn Parkinson 02/12/16

I've been a foster parent for 2 children. I was summoned to court every 3 mos for 2 yrs. I was the only person in the courtroom that represented with a court appointed atty.

The mother had a public def. The father had a public def. H&W had their atty.

The guardian adlitem was an atty and had an atty representing her. (I wasn't told the children could be represented - I had to find out on my own and request an adlitem)

I was given no instruction on my rights as a foster parent, frankly I had few.

I asked if I could make a statement then was excused to leave the court.

I was caring for 2 foster children 24/7 and wasn't permitted to hear the proceeding.

We had 5 cas workers in 19 mos. One accusation of letting the children see their mother when there was a no-contact order and threatened legal repercussions. It was completely false.

One of our foster kids, H&W recommended parental rights be terminated. The judge gave custody back to the mother - because of her disinterest we were eventually allowed to seek guardianship. Our other child went to her father who had never had custody and went kicking & screaming. When will the best interest of the child be the driving force in our foster system.

02/12/16
Jamie Taylor

Our family recently joined the ranks of foster parents in the State of Idaho. We had only one respite case under our belts when we were asked to transition a child from their former foster home to an out of state relative for permanency.

Our relationship with our case worker started out well. However, we were told limited information about the child, and were not given access to the former family in order to get vital information pertinent to their special needs. Thankfully, the child's Guardian ad litem served as an invaluable resource to us during the first few difficult weeks.

This child was hastily removed from a situation and was not allowed to say goodbye to the only family they had known for their entire life. The child was sad, sullen, and generally displayed a flat affect. We assumed that this was their typical personality.

After several times of trying to get information on this child's former foster family, I finally reached the foster mom through Facebook. She was able to help me with vital information to the child's care.

After 3 weeks of no contact with the child's former foster family, they were permitted a visit. When the family walked through the door, this child's demeanor changed completely. Suddenly they were running around with a huge grin, squealing with joy, and their eyes were lit up in a way we had not seen.

The former foster family had been told that they should maintain contact with this child if they wanted to continue to be a permanency option should the out of state placement fall through. For that reason, they continued visits with the child each week. At one point this child had 4 different "moms." Birth Mom, Out of state family member (who visited monthly), former foster mom, and myself. The confusion and frustration was evident on this child's face every week. There were moments of anger, tantrums, sleepless nights, etc. These behaviors happened no matter who the child was visiting.

With dedication, I worked tirelessly to help this child form an attachment to me and our family. I would hold them close and rub their back. I would encourage frequent eye contact. I would meet all their needs as quickly as possible, so that they would feel secure. Many nights I would find myself rocking this child in the middle of the night as they sobbed in frustration.

After many months, I have seen a change in this child. They have a sparkle in their eye. They are able to regulate their emotions (which is what foster parents are there to help them do). This child does struggle with trusting new people who come into their life, but part of that is age appropriate.

What I see in hind-sight, is that foster families *are* capable of crossing a line. Of wanting a child to be part of their family so desperately that they will do anything to stand in the way of what the Department of Health and Welfare thinks is best. And in such cases, it is probably best for a child to be moved. However, as much as possible, the Department should do everything they possibly can to keep the child in a secure environment. What I have witnessed is tragic, and has taken extreme intentionality to undo. Not every foster parent is going to work that hard to help a child "re-attach" when they have been so traumatized.

Jamie Taylor
2/12/16

02/12/16
Pages i - vi
Pages 1 - 86

Idaho Foster Care Reform 2016

February 12, 2016

Compilation of Stories, Comments, Messages and
Petition Comments Received in the past 5 days

Via Facebook and Email

Since Saturday February 6, 2016

1341 Facebook "Likes"

250+ Stories

Over 500 signers of the Idaho Foster Care Reform
Petition

02/12/16

SUMMARY OF "FOSTER CARE REFORM" PROPOSED LEGISLATION (2016)

There seems to be a myth in some child welfare offices that attached children can be moved with the assumption that the future placement will be a reflection of the past. Every time we move children who show the courage to attach, we teach them that attachments are ultimately painful...¹

Idaho Department of Health and Welfare currently has an express, standard practice of choosing distant, out of state relatives for permanent placements for children in foster care over the child's long term foster care placement, regardless of the individual needs of the child and, most importantly, the child's attachment to foster caregivers. Relatives are selected as the permanent placement so long as the relative meets the State's definition of "fit and willing." No other permanent placement option will be considered unless any potential relative option is first "ruled out" under this standard, which is the minimal threshold of having a home study approved in the state in which the relative resides.

Because of this policy, foster children are often removed from what have become their families (and in many cases the only family they have ever known having been placed from birth), and placed with unknown "relatives." Foster families watch as their happy, thriving young foster children experience intense emotional and physical pain from the literal disappearance of their family – just as children who have been removed from abusive or neglectful homes. But in these cases, there was no abuse or neglect—just a State policy that a blood relative placement—no matter how remote—is "better in the long run." And these decisions run contrary to everything these foster parents have been trained about the best interests of children, and well established principles of attachment and trauma.

Foster families who then ask questions about these relative placements, or express disagreement with these decisions, are told that if they do not support the placement decision, the foster children will be removed from their home to a new foster home better able to "transition" the child into yet another home....Foster parents know well that such a move would cause even more trauma to these children. Foster parents become afraid and have no ability to advocate for the children because they are told they are "not a party to the child protection case," or regardless, the Department has "sole authority" over these decisions under Idaho law and there is nothing even the court can do to change to course of that child's future.

These are not isolated incidences; they are routine decisions based on a formal IDHW policy preferring relative permanent placements. The pervasiveness of this policy statewide is promoted by the child protection community's belief for over a decade that

¹ Training of Dr. Deborah Gray for the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare on June 24, 2011, page 1. Dr. Gray is an author, educator, therapist and former foster parent, and a leader in the field of attachment and adoption. She is the founder of Nurturing Adoptions, and the author of *Attaching in Adoption, Practical Tools for Today's Parents* (2002; 2009) and *Nurturing Adoptions, Creating Resilience after Neglect and Trauma* (2007).

under Idaho law, the Department is the "sole authority" over placement decisions and not subject to any judicial oversight or review even when the best interests of the child are legitimately disputed.

Aside from the undisputed emotional devastation that a young child undergoes from being abruptly removed from his or her primary attachments, and the chilling effect this policy has on the ability to recruit caring foster families, these practices run afoul of numerous federal mandates regarding children's rights under federal child welfare laws.

1. Idaho's indefinite timeframe within which relatives can come forward to become a permanent placement violates that child's right to timely permanence.

Federal laws set the minimal standards with which Idaho's child protection laws must comply in order for this state to receive federal matching funds for its child and family services programs. In 1997, the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), P.L. 105-89, was enacted to promote significant reform to national child welfare standards with respect primarily to the safety of children, acceleration of permanency and promotion of adoptions. Major provisions of ASFA relevant to permanent placement of children include:

- Clarifying that in making reasonable efforts regarding the permanent goal for a child, the health and safety of the child shall be paramount, 42 U.S.C. 671(a)(15);
- Requiring states to terminate parental rights when children are in foster care 15 out of 22 months, unless an exception applies, 42 U.S.C. 675(5)(E);
- Allowing children to be free for adoption without reunification efforts in "aggravated circumstances," such as extreme physical or sexual abuse, murder of another child, involuntary termination of another child and other extreme circumstances. 42 U.S.C. 471(a)(15)(B);
- Requiring shorter time limits to make permanent placement decisions by holding the permanency hearing at 12 months (instead of 18 months) from the date the child comes into foster care. 42 U.S.C. 675(5)(C);
- Clarifying that efforts toward finalizing an alternate placement plan do not violate a state's obligation to make reasonable efforts toward reunification with a birth family. 42 U.S.C. 671(F).

More recently, "a description of the activities that a state has undertaken to **reduce the length of time children who have not attained 5 years of age are without a permanent family.** . ." was added to states' 5-Year Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) reporting requirements that are necessary for the receipt of federal funding. Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act, P.L. 112-34 Section 101, 42 USC 622 (2011). Notably, in the current CFSP for Idaho, the only description of an apparent ongoing activity to reduce time in care for children under five (5) years of age is the use of concurrent planning stating:

A concurrent plan is developed for all children who come into the custody of the Department. *Many infants are adopted by the family (both relatives and non-relatives) with whom they are placed at the time of removal.*

The IDHW Concurrent Planning Standard recognizes the importance of these attachments and that there is a time frame within which relatives should be considered for permanent placements because of these attachments:

Relatives should be instructed that due to the bonds of attachment the child forms with their caregivers, it may not be found in the child's best interest to change placement to a relative who shows interest in being a placement resource later on in a case. Relatives should be made aware that when relatives wait to come forward until it is clear that their relative child cannot return home, and the child is in another stable permanent resource placement, the Department might not consider the relative a possible placement resource as it may not be in the best interest of the child to place with his/her relative at that time.²

Idaho Department of Health & Welfare, Concurrent Planning Standard (rev. 12/15). Nonetheless, the Department rarely rejects a relative for permanent placement, regardless of the child's attachments because of the "relative permanent placement preference" policy and practice.

Delaying permanency for children while waiting for relatives to be found or approved is inconsistent with actual federal mandates and policy that children, particularly those under five years of age, as emphasized by the Child and Family Service Improvement and Innovation Act, need permanency as quickly as possible, and that it is in their best interests to give a deadline to even their biological families. Our state practice of giving relatives indefinite grace periods is clearly contrary to the letter and spirit of the federal laws which were adopted based on valid, peer reviewed research and sound policy.

2. Idaho's position that the IDHW has "sole authority" over permanent placement decisions is not in the best interests of children and is inconsistent with federal provisions requiring permanency hearings to be heard by a reviewing body that is independent of the agency receiving federal funds, and to consider all placement options, both in and out of state.

² "Time is the definitive factor. Bonding is possible after three months, probable after six months, and almost certain after 12 months. At some point the child's right to permanence and emotional stability must come before the rights of the biological parents. Recognizing that a year is a very long time in the life of a developing child, ASFA requires that the state file a termination of parental rights within that time period. Continuing delay, even to grant biological parents extra chances, is destructive to the child."
J. Kenny, PhD and L. Groves, MMFT, BONDING AND THE CASE FOR PERMANENCE, PREVENTING MENTAL ILLNESS, CRIME AND HOMELESSNESS, AMONG CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION (2010) (fn omitted).

For over a decade now, the IDHW has successfully relied upon the Supreme Court decision *IDHW v. Hays*, 137 Idaho 233 (2002), for its position that it has unfettered, unreviewable authority in placement decisions. In *Hays*, deciding a grandparent's right to intervene in an adoption proceeding, the Idaho Supreme Court stated, in *dicta*, that because the IDHW must consent to an adoption as the appointed guardian of a foster child under the Idaho's adoption consent statute, only the Department has authority to decide who will adopt the child. This narrow ruling has been since extrapolated to insulate the Department from oversight in all matters relating to child placement decision.

42 U.S.C. 675(5)(C) provides that "in the case of a child who will not be returned to the parent, the hearing *shall consider in-State and out-of-State placement options*, and, in the case of a child described in subparagraph (A)(ii), the hearing shall determine whether the out-of-State placement continues to be appropriate and in the best interests of the child." See also 42 U.S.C. Sec. 671 (a)(E)(i). Under the federal regulations:

The permanency hearing must be conducted by a family or juvenile court or another body appointed or approved by the court which is not a part of or under the supervision or direction of the title IV-E agency.

45 CFR 1355.20. Independence in the reviewing body is important to ensure that permanency decisions are based on the best interests of children, and not driven by funding reporting. Resigning all authority over permanent placement decisions to the IDHW is contrary to the federal requirements of independent judicial review and ensuring that decisions are made in the best interests of children. The position that Idaho courts have no authority over placement decisions is also inconsistent with the mandate that permanency hearings, before an independent decision-maker, include consideration of both in and out of state placement options.

3. Idaho's practice of not allowing foster parents to meaningfully participate in permanency hearings violates a child's right to have the court consider foster parents' input in making permanency decisions.

ASFA also added the provision mandating that foster parents be "provided with notice of, and an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing to be held with respect to the child," 42 U.S.C. 675(5)(G). The purpose of the provision was the recognition that foster parents providing daily care for foster children are uniquely situated to provide the courts with information on the best interests of children in permanent planning decisions and otherwise. The implementing regulations defining "permanency hearing" expressly exclude any proceeding not "open to the participation of the foster parents" from the definition of a "permanency hearing":

Paper review, ex parte hearings, agreed orders, or other actions or hearings which are not open to the participation of the parents of the child, the child (if of appropriate age), the foster parents or preadoptive parents (if any) are not permanency hearings.

45 CFR 1355.20. Idaho's current practice of allowing foster parents to appear and speak regarding the status of the children in their care, but otherwise exclude them from the hearing, and deny them any relevant information about the placement options being considered, is inconsistent with the federal regulation defining a permanency hearing, and the child's rights to have the court consider the foster parents' input in permanency decisions.

4. Federal guidance regarding "relative placements" emphasize early engagement of relatives for foster care for better outcomes for children, not permanent placement in lieu of attachments to foster care-givers.

With regard to placing children with relatives, ASFA directs:

"Consider giving preference to an adult relative over a nonrelated caregiver when determining placement for a child, provided that the relative caregiver meets all relevant State child protection standards." 42 U.S.C. Sec. 671(a)(19). Placement refers to placing a child in the home of an individual other than a parent or guardian or in a facility other than a youth services center.

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/majorfedlegis.pdf>

The term "placement" refers to foster care. All research and policy on "kinship care" refers to kinship foster care, which makes sense given the studies and the reasons that the outcomes for children placed in foster care with relatives would be better. This is not disputed. Families who are in a position to provide kinship foster care are more likely to have had a prior relationship with the child, or the child's parents, are supportive of reunification efforts with the parents and in local proximity which causes less disruption to the child and less trauma.

Consistent with the research on relative or kinship foster care placement, *early engagement of relatives* is promoted by federal mandates and incentives. Federal law provides that the State is to exercise due diligence to identify and provide notice to relatives "within 30 days after the removal from the custody of the parent or parents of the child..." 42 U.S.C. Sec. 671(29). Federal grants are offered to states to start or expand current family finding programs.

There is no argument that efforts to notify and involve relatives are to occur early in a child protection case precisely because children placed with non-relative caregivers can and do form strong bonds of attachment such that removing the child is likely to cause trauma. The one mandate in federal law regarding relatives and "placement," added by the Fostering Connections Act, P.L. 110-351(2008), is that the State must provide written notice within 30 days of removal of a child to relatives that a child is in care and that they have a right to be a caregiver for the child. 42 U.S.C. 671(a)(28). The relatives must be informed that if they do not come forward in response to the notice, their right will be waived. This is further evidence of the overall federal policy that relative engagement must be early, and that late coming relatives may not be considered due to the child's

attachments to current caregivers. (This is also expressly stated in the IDHW policy as discussed above.)

5. Moving children from foster homes because of placement disagreements is harmful to children.

It is undisputed that moving children from foster care homes is harmful to children with long term consequences. However, when the Department's placement decisions are challenged, children are often removed from the potential adoptive foster home without good cause and contrary to the indisputable, generally accepted information regarding the damage children suffer from foster care moves. Under current Idaho law or practice, the Department has no oversight in its decisions to move children under these circumstances, or otherwise, and foster parents have no means to object in court or provide information to the court on the decision to have a child moved.

The intent of the bill is to address these issues by asking the legislature to:

- Clarify that under Idaho law and consistent with federal law, the relative placement preference applies in foster care placement decisions early in the child's stay in foster care, and that permanent placement decisions always must be governed by the best interest of the child and consider the child's attached bonds.
- Clarify that under Idaho law and consistent with federal law, the Court has the duty and responsibility to pre-approve permanent placements both in and out of state as being in the best interest of the child.
- Clarify that under Idaho law and consistent with federal law, the Department's authority to consent to an adoption is subject to judicial approval as being in the best interest of the child.
- Create timeframes for the investigation of and notification of relatives for foster care placement to put an end to the current practice of giving relatives an indefinite grace period to come forward to be considered for placement and adoption.
- Clarify that under Idaho law and consistent with federal law, foster children have a right to have foster parents given fair notice of a hearing and the opportunity to be heard on the issues presented in the hearing.
- Recognize that moves in foster care create significant trauma to foster children with long-term consequences to the child's well-being, and clarify that under Idaho law that removal from a foster home must be shown to be for good cause, and in the best interest of the child, and give foster parents the right to be heard in court on the removal of a child from their home.

Story 1

In 2009, I decided to take the next steps in doing something I had wanted to do for some time, become a foster parent. It was a six month process in which every bit of my life was raked over with a fine tooth comb and took classes to learn how to best welcome a child into my home; the process was long, tiring, and tedious. Finally, in September, I received the official word that I had been approved, but I figured it would be some time before I was actually called to take in a child.

Much to my surprise, just one short week later, the phone call came: a five year old boy needed a place. I returned the call to the caseworker only to find that the little boy had been placed, BUT a little 8 month old girl had JUST been brought into the office, and would I be willing to take her. Of course I would! Over the next couple of hours, I scrambled to prepare for an infant, and picked her up from the caseworker. Her giant blue eyes and her little pink overalls are two things I will never forget about that day. Little did I know, that day, October 7, 2009, would be the day would be change the rest of my life. No class, no social worker, no nothing could have prepared me for the journey that little girl and I would take together. For the first six months she was with me, I was told she would be going home to her mother any day, but those months turned to a year, and then another year, and yet another year of promises she would be going home to her mother. In addition, FOSTER CHILD was considered an Indian child, so the parameters of the ICWA likely applied to her, and she would have to "legally" be placed with an Indian family. However, over those first few years, her tribe could not take jurisdiction of the case, and they offered very little involvement in the process, and what involvement they did have was limited and sporadic, often times failing to appear at court hearings, leaving IDHW to make decisions about her placement. In the meantime, in fall of 2010, the biological mother had another child, a boy. I was more than willing to take in FOSTER CHILD's brother, but my inquiries and attempts to discuss this option with my caseworker were left unanswered until the baby was born. It was then IDHW placed him at birth with another foster home (against their own policies) stating that the baby would be "better with a stay at home mom" (also not a valid reason according to their own policies). The other foster mom and I worked as best we could to facilitate a relationship between the siblings. After YEARS together, it goes without saying that two human hearts cannot help but become bonded and in love with one another. There was minimal involvement with the biological mother, absolutely ZERO involvement with the father, and very little, if any, interest from ANY other biological family member my little FOSTER CHILD really only knew me as her mother. Eventually, in 2012, the biological mother voluntarily terminated her rights to both children because she was led to believe that FOSTER CHILD and her brother would be adopted by the foster mothers that had raised them for years. The biological father's rights were going to be involuntarily terminated according to the ICWA guidelines, and I too was under the impression I would become FOSTER CHILD's adoptive home because not only were parental rights being terminated, but there were no other viable relative options that could be found, or no option that was willing to remove FOSTER CHILD from my home where she had been most of her life. However, the moment mom's rights were terminated, IDHW completely changed their tune, and told me I would most likely NOT be FOSTER CHILD's permanent placement despite having been her home for nearly 2.5 years. They said because of the ICWA, they HAD to keep looking for an Indian placement; I would always hear that "Boise" says we have no choice but to find a new placement for her. At this time, IDHW decided to look for a biological father for the little brother (again over a year after the baby brother had been born; not best practice). They did find a father verified through a DNA test. It turned out that FOSTER CHILD and her brother came from related fathers, and therefore the brother's family would need to be given first

opportunity to adopt FOSTER CHILD as well, not only because of the sibling relationship but because the family was and Indian home and would meet the demands of ICWA. It is important to note that these family members, who lived in the same city, were aware that FOSTER CHILD was in foster care, they were present with the biological mother at her court hearings when FOSTER CHILD was first taken into care, and they had said they did NOT want to be a placement for FOSTER CHILD (all of this was verified through court and CASA records). For all the years that FOSTER CHILD was with me, they had no interest in her, did not ever have a visitation with her, and were wholly uninterested in her. The family was definitely interested in the baby brother because his relation them was as grandson, while FOSTER CHILD was a niece. They were given custody of the brother within six months time. During this time, they were still uncertain as to whether or not they were interested in adopting FOSTER CHILD. IDHW meeting was arranged with an attachment specialist to discuss what would be the ramifications of removing FOSTER CHILD from a home that she had lived in for years at this point. The specialist, without hesitation, stated that "the move would be one of the most devastating events in her life from which she would never recover." At this point, the family said they did not want to do this to FOSTER CHILD, so they would not seek custody of her. The department then started to move forward in making me FOSTER CHILD's adoptive mother. However, the family members then changed their minds fearing that I would keep her from them and never allow them to know her because Idaho is a closed adoption state. IDHW then changed their plan and began to prepare the family to take custody of FOSTER CHILD. IDHW spent the next months working with the attachment specialist to develop a transition plan that would best help FOSTER CHILD transition from my home to the relatives after so much time. At this point, IDHW was adamant that they would do what was best for FOSTER CHILD, and do everything they could to minimize the inevitable trauma that FOSTER CHILD would experience. The transition plan was very detailed and required the family and I to work together closely and spend as much time as possible together because that would be best for FOSTER CHILD. Around this time I decided to hire an attorney, even though I knew foster parents had no rights in the state of Idaho, because I was determined to do all that I could to help ensure FOSTER CHILD's rights were being met. IDHW did not openly oppose me on this and allowed both my attorney and I to attend all court hearings. One big piece my attorney was able to get into the case was questioning whether or not the Indian Child Welfare Act actually applied to FOSTER CHILD's case. CASA had also hired an attorney because they did not agree with IDHW's decision in regards to it being in line with policy and with FOSTER CHILD's BEST INTERESTS. Together my attorney and CASA's attorney were able to present evidence to get the judge in the case to rule that the ICWA did not apply to FOSTER CHILD, and therefore IDHW DID NOT have to place FOSTER CHILD with the Indian family members. However, IDHW decided (not in line with their policies) that they needed to follow the "spirit of ICWA" and place her with the family members anyway. However, the family would not go along with the transition plan because it would have been too much of a burden on them timewise. IDHW, who had been so adamant, also retracted their decision, and declared such detailed transition plan was not really necessary after all, so it was scratched, and they began to transition FOSTER CHILD. Their reasoning was that FOSTER CHILD being placed with family was so much more important to a child's well-being than a transition plan would be. It is important to remember that FOSTER CHILD was over 4 years old at this point. She had been in my home since the age of 8 months. Not only did the department start a transition, they also refused to share with FOSTER CHILD any information as to what was happening to her or why she was expected to build a relationship with people she didn't really know. I was forbidden from answering her questions and truly was expected to lie to her convince her that her fears and questions were wrong. In November of 2013, to help speed up the process (because

FOSTER CHILD was not responding well to developing a relationship with the family) IDHW hired a woman to provide care for FOSTER CHILD so she could continue to work on a relationship with the family, outside of my presence. FOSTER CHILD spent her days at the woman's home where the family would come spend time with her or take her on outings. FOSTER CHILD's mental health began a huge decline; she began having toilet accidents, harming herself, having tantrums, withdrawing, harming others. IDHW's response was that I must be doing something to her on my end to cause her the problems. Not once did they acknowledge that removing her from the only home and mother she knew could be the cause (at this point FOSTER CHILD is nearly 5 years old). The caregiver expressed her concerns, gave her honest opinions about what was happening, yet the response was only to speed up the process. One day in March of 2014, I dropped FOSTER CHILD off at the caregiver's home. Later that day I was called and told I would not be able to return to pick her up because the transition plan had been completed. I was not able to say goodbye to her, she and I never even got talk about what was happening, or to have any closure. She left my home that day with only the clothes on her back and a few of her personal things, never knowing she would never return to the home, the room, the pets that she had called hers since she was 8 months old. She was removed from the person she considered her mother, and she was told that I was never her mother and never her family. The other important family and friends FOSTER CHILD had also never had a chance to tell her goodbye. One week later I was offered at "goodbye" visit with FOSTER CHILD to be held at the IDHW office under STRICT supervision. I felt like a prisoner. I was not able to address with FOSTER CHILD what was happening or why I was there or where I had been the last week. I was told not to upset her, to pretend that everything was okay, and that she was JUST FINE. I spent 2 hours with FOSTER CHILD at the H&W office, the IDHW supervisor sitting 2 feet from us at all times. At the end of two hours, FOSTER CHILD was pulled from me screaming and crying and begging me to not leave her and wanting to know why I was leaving her. All of this, I was told by IDHW, was "BEST" for her because she was going to live with her "real" family. At age 5, after 4 ½ years of raising her, FOSTER CHILD and I were forcibly and cruelly separated, and I have never seen her again. I can only imagine what goes through her mind on a daily basis, and what she is thinking about where all of her friends and foster family went; she was not provided the proper help in processing what happened to her. There were so many other scenarios that could have happened so that FOSTER CHILD could have maintained all of her important relationships, minimized the trauma she inevitably experienced, and allowed her to still develop meaningful and significant relationships with biological family.

Story 2

My husband and I have been foster care parents since March 2015. At that time, we received four (4) children, all siblings. We have known the mother of the children for twenty (20) years and therefore were considered "kinship". At first, we didn't have any problems with the department other than not receiving responses to emails and phone calls for day, even weeks (even though the department standard is 24 hours). However, our case worker went on maternity leave earlier than expected and we received a new case worker. All of our interactions with him and his supervisor have been negative. Immediately after he was assigned the case, the children began overnight visits with their birth mother. The case had been open two (2) weeks shy of a year when he took over and the children were still having twice weekly supervised visits with their birth mother. This was due to the fact that she had submitted multiple dirty UAs for methamphetamine and was not living in adequate housing. Each Sunday evening when the children came home from their visits, there were issues. The youngest child

(whom turned five (5) on Christmas) regressed due to the changes in their schedule. When she would come home, she would be covered in dried urine as well as the clothes she had worn at her mother's over the weekend. I reported it to our case worker, and he ignored the health issue. One weekend, three (3) out of the four (4) children came home with a rash all over their faces, arms, backs, and chests. Their mother refused to seek medical attention all weekend. I took them to the doctor the following morning and it was determined the rash was due to a severe case of bed bugs from their mother's home. I reported this to the case worker, and again he did nothing. The children then disclosed to us that there was physical abuse occurring in their mother's home. She lives with a transsexual who has three children of his/her own. Our foster children informed us that he/she gets angry with his/her sons and "chokes them and throws them on the floor really hard". The children also told us about a "game" they play with their mother in which they slap her as hard as they can in the face and then she slaps them in the face. This "game" was witnessed by the mother's sister and reported to us. I reported these concerns to the case worker, and again he did nothing.

Despite the mother not completing multiple tasks on her case plan, the department chose to return the children to her. Per her case plan, she was to maintain housing and employment for a minimum of six (6) months. She obtained housing a few weeks before the year review hearing in November 2015 and at that time, still was not employed. The housing she is in is not sufficient as it is a 3-bedroom home of which she has one room and her roommate has the other. This leaves one (1) bedroom for her four (4) children and her roommate's three (3) children. The department determined this was adequate. She also does not have a driver's license due to failing to pay child support for her other two (2) children. When the department was questioned about this issue, they reported that they "don't care if she drives illegally with the children in the car" stating that it's a "poverty issue" rather than a safety concern. After all of this, the department asked us if we supported reunification. I responded that I did not support reunification at that time due to the fact that she had not completed the case plan created by the department when the kids were removed. Our case worker's supervisor then told me to "learn my place" and if I didn't, they would take the children away from us. Unfortunately, they chose to follow-through on their threat. A couple of days before our final court hearing in January 2016 to determine if extended home visits would be granted, the department called us and informed us that despite the ruling in court, the children would not return to our custody. They reported "we know you have created a great home and the kids are well taken care of. We know the kids love you and will be greatly traumatized if we remove them and split them up, but that's what we are going to do". When asked to explain why they were making that decision, their response was either silence, or to say "that's just what we decided". Despite all of the biological family members of the children, as well as the Guardian ad litem, voicing their concerns with the children returning to their birth mother, the department chose to recommend it to the judge. They gave the Guardian ad litem the options of either supporting extended home visits or supporting that the children be split up and sent to different foster homes. Therefore, the Guardian ad litem had no choice but to support a return to the birth mother.

Story 3

When the boys came to live with me they had already been in foster care for eight months. Their father was in prison for physically abusing their older brother, another brother had been permanently removed from the family for sexually abusing their sisters. In fact, all of the children had been sexually abused by members of their extended family. In spite of this, the boys were generally cheerful children, and they had been happy and comfortable in their first foster home. They were removed from that placement

because of an accusation against their foster parents by their mother. The accusation was probably unfounded, but they were taken from that home with only a few hours' warning, and they were told at the time that the move was expected to be temporary.

As a result of the move, the second grader changed schools – to his third school in three years. I took him to say goodbye to his teacher, but he missed the friends he had made in his old school for a long time. Although he loved his new teacher and spoke well of his classmates, it was months before he dropped his guard enough to make real friends. By the next fall, he was thrilled to have close friends to proudly invite to his birthday party. With stability and structure, this child who had been in the extended resource room a year before was able to access his amazing potential and improve his academics so much that he was dismissed from special education. For the first time in his life he realized that he had talents and abilities, and he began to take pride in them. He learned what an engineer is and hoped to become one – the first time he'd ever dared to imagine a future.

While his brother moved to a new school, the preschooler remained at his previous school at his mother's insistence. This meant leaving the house at 6:30 in the morning so that he could catch the Head Start bus, as well as a move to a new after-school daycare. This little boy was so sweet and smart, but he *hated* the daycare. He cried every single morning for four months when he remembered that he had to go, but my repeated pleas to the case workers to consider a change in his interest fell on deaf ears. It wasn't until summer finally came and he could be home or go with his brother to our family sitter that he finally felt happy.

Both boys were wonderful, bright, good-natured children, but they came to me with a history of betrayal. The older boy was quieter, wary. He turned his anxiety inward and against himself. Early in their time with me, he pulled his own tooth out long before it was ready to come out, and for months he managed anxiety by picking at his skin or scratching himself. Changes in his routine led him to run to his room and hide under his blankets, and there were weeks when I had to change his sheets every morning because he had wet the bed. It took at least six months before he truly trusted that he could come to me and get the help he needed. The younger boy turned his stress outward. In the first months, he would burst into tears or fly into rages that seemed inexplicable. After many months of holding and hugging him through the tears and screams, he finally believed he was safe. Life settled into a calm, comfortable, loving routine.

Until the case workers decided that members of the extended family should adopt the boys.

Parental rights had been terminated a few months earlier, and the department had asked me if I would be willing to adopt the boys. They pointed out that the boys were thriving in my home, and the boys told case workers they wanted to stay there. Of course I was delighted to adopt them, and we all began to anticipate our futures together and talk about the things we would do. But after the boys had been in

foster care for a year and a half, case workers convinced relatives to pursue adopting them. Although asked by case workers, these relatives refused to take in the boys when they were first removed from their home, and they refused again when they were removed from their first foster home, in spite of seeing them regularly at supervised visits. These relatives were also 70 and 75, meaning they will be close to 90 when the boys reach adulthood. Given their current health problems, however, it is unlikely they will live that long. I pointed out to social workers that they were nearly guaranteeing that these boys would face more losses, but they continued to pursue the relatives as adoptive parents and began unsupervised visits with them. During these visits the boys were exposed to extended family with severe emotional and behavioral problems, histories of perpetrating physical and sexual abuse, unsupervised contact with the parents who had lost custody of them, and unsupervised play in dangerous situations, including around firearms. The older boy began wetting his bed again. He began lying, and stealing. He became openly skeptical of all adults and their motivations. The younger boy's rages returned. He began to have nightmares about being kidnapped from our home by strange men. When I expressed concern about this to case workers, I was told that the nightmares and rages and sobbing fits were normal. I pointed out that none of those things were normal experiences for a 4-year-old, but case workers literally shrugged and told me that "biology is best".

Three days before Christmas, the boys were moved to their new home with their great-aunt and uncle. We celebrated the holiday together before they left, and on the day I packed boxes and boxes of toys and clothes and books – the accumulated evidence of our lives together – into a van and watched them drive away. The social workers who had forced that moment upon us weren't there to witness it, just like they weren't there when I told the boys it would happen, and held them as they sobbed.

It's been two years since they were placed with their relatives. They have attended at least two schools in that time. Because the relatives who adopted them move frequently, they will undoubtedly attend many more. Their potential will likely remain untapped – no one in the family has attended college, and the family's culture does not encourage achievement. The choice of an adoptive home was made entirely on the basis of a fairly distant biological relationship. "They always go back to their families, anyway," I was told. Meanwhile, their sisters were returned to their mother because, at ages 11 and 12, they were "basically old enough to raise themselves". When social workers say things like that, it's clear that decisions are being made because of misguided policies and not in the best interests of vulnerable children.

Story 4

It would be so simple to start this letter with all the factual information surrounding how RAD, or Reactive Attachment Disorder occurs and how it impacts the children involved. I want to give you a more personal look at what trauma actually does to a child, family and community. Eleven years ago, I was a younger mama with a four year old and a two year old. These two boys were our joy and they were best buddies. It was about this time that we decided to expand our family through adoption. Our little boys were so excited to learn they would be getting a new brother. With their young minds, they assumed a new baby brother would bring more of the fun and joy that they brought to each other. A new buddy to play with. As parents, we naively thought this would be the case as well.

We learned that our new son came into the Foster Care system at the age of ten weeks suffering from severe abuse that left him with a bone that had been purposely broken. By this time our son was approximately seventeen months old and very bonded to his foster parents. The Judge had just terminated parental rights and we would now be allowed to bring him to his forever home. So after fifteen months in foster care, he came home to us. We were thrilled, our older boys were beyond excited. After six months we were anxious to be able to formally adopt him and give him our name and assure our older boys that we were going to be able to keep their baby brother. At this point he had now been in foster care for a total of twenty one months, as we were still not legally his parents. At this time, our first big surprise came in the form of notification from our caseworker that at the last minute, the birth mother had brought up the possibility of our son having some Native American heritage. This is where we became very familiar with ICWA – the Indian Child Welfare Act. So in a matter of days, we went from being so anxious to adopt our son to the very real possibility that he could be taken from our home due to the fact that we could not prove and Native American heritage was present in either myself or my husband. We waited almost another six months as tribe after tribe denied any interest in our son. Finally, after a twenty seven months in foster care, we were able to legally adopt our son. By this time he was approaching the age of three and it was becoming evident that his emerging behaviors once thought to just be the “terrible twos” were not going away. In fact, they were increasing and becoming at times frightening.

By the time he was three and a half, we sought help from the department. I contacted our case worker and explained to her what was going on and was told that he “must just not be sleeping” and to give him melatonin. We were also referred to Family Connections. After six months of in home counseling, parental support and Love and Logic training, the behaviors continued to escalate with no end in sight. We were desperate. Our two other boys grew increasingly estranged from their brother and were afraid to play with him. Once again, I reached out to the department requesting more intensive help. We started therapy and medication. All to no avail.

By the time our son was five years old, he attacked me with the wooden closets rods designed to hold clothes. We again, sought help and his current therapist suggested residential. There are very few facilities that will accept a five year old. Another hurdle at that time was Medicaid, as they stated they do not pay for residential services for Idaho. I ended up in the emergency room at St. Alphonsus being questioned by CPS workers and talking about possible pediatric psych. hospital admittance. It was determined that due to his age, we would take him home with a prescription for a medication that melts on his tongue so he cannot spit it out and will sedate him when he rages.

This was the first big crack in my armor. Continued weekly therapy and medication management seemed to do nothing. One time while driving to Grandma and Grandpa’s house, he assaulted me so bad in the car I had to pull into the parking lot at the grocery store and get my other three children out of the car for safety. It was freezing outside, but there was nothing I could do as he pulled my hair from behind and punched me in the face. Once free, I was able to call my husband and the police. By the time

he was seven years old and in first grade, he had several physical altercations where he kicked and punched the principle, other kids, the special ed. Teacher and the continued physical abuse myself and my other children endured every time my son would rage. It was at this time that he committed his first felony against an officer, threatening to "take her gun and shoot her in the head."

I will never get the picture out of my mind of my tiny seven year old in hand cuffs. His wrists were so small, both arms fit in one side of the cuffs and left the other side to dangle behind him. My son is now ten years old. He has been let go by several therapists who all suggested residential for my son. I fought Medicaid, Optum, and more paperwork than I can remember to obtain these services for my son. This process took over a year. My son is currently in a specialized school setting with three teachers in a fully contained classroom. He has a minimum of three assault and battery charges within the first four months of the 2015-2016 school year. He has enough charges to be locked up for a year and a half. He was not with us the last two Christmases. The first one, he was in residential in Texas, the second one, he was in detention. We continue weekly therapy and monthly medication management, coupled with the ongoing services we are seeking through children's mental health, and his bi-weekly parole visits and frequent court dates. I am not able to work due to the time involved in managing his care. My marriage has become at times, just managing our son's rages, arrests and constant supervision. We cannot use babysitters, or leave him with very many people. Vacations and any change in routines is a sure recipe for a rage and anxiety. Our entire family now suffers from PTSD. My other children will need counseling to process all they have been through and had to give up. My boys who once used to be best buddies are now guarded to each other due to all the hurt and violence they have witnessed. They are embarrassed to have friends over in case they witness a rage. Our home has been vandalized by our son and our furniture has been destroyed by scissors, our animals have been hurt, and so far we have thousands of dollars in repairs to his room and furniture. He completely punched and kicked all the way through his bedroom door several times. Full sheets of drywall had to be replaced in his room as he punched and kicked holes in the walls, and then urinated and defecated inside those holes and his heater vent in the floor of his room. These are just some of the very real things that we have endured in the last ten years due to this horrible thing called Reactive Attachment Disorder.

PART 2:

I wanted to share our story about the adoption/foster process concerning our fourth son. He is our second adoption through the department. There are also some references to the struggles of our 10 year old son due to his adoption story as some of the challenges overlap. Often times, when one child is triggered, it will set off the other son. This does not include at all the MANY challenges that my older two children have endured due to the fact that trauma affects the entire family. Trauma comes in many forms.

In December of 2008 when our son was about nine months old, we received a call from the department inquiring if we would be interested in adopting a baby boy. After hearing a brief summary regarding the

details of his case, we learned that he had been born meth affected and that at this time the long term challenges were not clear. We decided that we would in fact, love to adopt this little boy.

At this time, we were already licensed foster parents and could easily transition a child into our home. As we waited to hear back from the department, the days turned into months and we weren't sure if or when this little boy would be joining our home. Five long months passed before we were able to bring him into our home.

By this time he was fourteen months old and becoming very bonded to his foster parents and his foster brother and sister. We were very nervous about this due to the fact that we had a previous adoption where our son was with his foster parents for sixteen months and was struggling with severe attachment issues. After our son joined our home, we worked very hard to help him with attachment while maintaining a bond to his now "aunt, uncle and cousins" who were previously just his "foster family".

Although this adoption went much more smoothly overall than our first, I have to question why he was allowed to remain in a foster care situation for five more months once a suitable, willing, and licensed home was found. In May of 2016 he will have been with us for seven years. While he is a very well-adjusted child and has bonded to us as his parents and his three brothers, he is not without challenges that stem from the adoption process.

As with our son, it is not uncommon for him to refuse to be away from me. I never know when his emotions will overwhelm him and he will feel that all too familiar anxiety that mama might not come back. Experiences outside of the home must be very thought out and regimented. What this looks like in "real life" is that the routine for transitioning to anything where I will not be present continually must always be made familiar and safe. This includes going to school in the mornings, trips to the grocery store, church attendance, the use of babysitters, etc. This does not include the challenges that most parents don't have to consider, for instance a dental appointment can be very challenging until the practice proves to be safe, and predictable. This would not normally seem like a big deal, but to a child who deals with this kind of anxiety even going back to the dentist chair alone, or going into a grocery store is a big deal.

There are always the questions of "will someone take me?" The door bell ringing at home can trigger anxiety and often full dysregulation accompanied by a significant meltdown as the child processes through the fear of who is coming to the house? Are they safe? Will they take me? What will I do if they hurt mama? There are also the concerns as a parent, that often these children are desensitized to "stranger danger" as they are taken by social workers, police, doctors, etc. as they come in to the care of the department and are having visitations. Having said this, it is not uncommon for one of my adopted

boys to try to leave with anyone who tells him their name. To him, that translates to "I know this person since I know their name." I have had to stay hyper-vigilant any time we are in a social setting.

My other adopted son on the other hand is so fearful of the intentions and outcomes of being around strangers, even ones that mom and dad say are "safe and ok." He will often become so deregulated that typically a rage ensues and it is not uncommon for him to have to take medication to completely calm him down. There are challenges with vacations, going to his brothers' baseball games and just routine days at the park or the swimming pool.

Trauma turns everything normal into a challenge both for the children and their caretakers. Nothing is simple or easy. You cannot just suddenly announce a surprise trip to ice cream because that will trigger anxiety. The child must know where we are going, how long will we be gone and the worst question "will we all be coming back home?" I could cite so many more daily challenges that exist in our home, but this has become our "normal" and while I would not change it for the world, I know we can do better. Not just for these kids but for our society that will be impacted for better or worse as these children either heal or sadly, end up taking their "hurts" out into society that continues to misunderstand the far reaching effects of childhood trauma.

Story 5

My husband and I have been foster parent for 3 years, we have welcomed 17 children into our home from respite care to emergency placements, and long term placements. These are a few of our stories. We would like to continue fostering, but at the same time our choices are to do whatever the workers tell us to do, or stop fostering. We also know if we stand up to the workers we risk losing the foster children in our home.

Part 1:

When the twins were first placed with us at 9 months old, the Dept didn't know how long the children had been left in a single crib before the police found them. We had the babies for a year and 4 days before they went to their Grandmother for permanency. In this case, I do not want to argue whether or not the babies should have stayed as much as the awful transition the workers arranged. We knew the transition was pending, and we were waiting for the "ok" to move forward. The worker emailed us, said they would like to do a transition in the next month, she asked us to check our schedules and let her know what worked, we had also had a transition meeting about a month prior with Grandma, where we both stated, we didn't have specifics we as adults needed, as long as it was best for the twins. I received the email, and in the Skype visit that night (Grandma lived out of state) I told her that we had received an email to discuss dates that morning, so I asked her what worked for her. Grandma replied "Oh, the worker already sent us our plan tickets we will be there next weekend (10 days) to pick up the twins" After emails later with Grandma, we had discovered the Worker had not asked the Grandma either about the schedule, as the Grandma was in the middle of a remodel project..... So not only did Grandma end up with the twins abruptly, she also had new to her toddlers, in the middle of a house remodel and her husband would be out of town for work for 3 weeks. The worker had told us there would be a 4-7 day transition period during our transition meeting, but in reality, we had 1/2 day. Grandma flew into

town late on a Friday, we had time together with them and the boys on Saturday, and their flight left very early Sunday morning. These boys, who knew us as mom and dad for a year, were passed off in one day, never to see us again. I believe if the workers had followed through with what they had told us- letting us pick the transition dates, as well as followed through with a 4-7 day transition plan it would have been better for the twins. When we buckled those boys in to their Grandmother's rental car, they looked so confused. They were 21 months old. I can only pray that they do not have lingering issues with abandonment, as they already had lost relationship with their birth parents, then they had their second parental relationship severed without a proper, and promised transition.

Part 2:

Two days before Christmas 9 year old N arrived. She had originally came into care in August, and had been living with a step mother on an extended home visit when it was decided she needed a safer home. Initially we were told it would be a 2 week respite situation..... it turned into 10.5 long months. Out of state family had already been contacted and working the ICPC paperwork. In the meantime N had weekly visits with her Grandfather, a sexual predator the Dept was aware of, but insisted the family bond was more important than the risk. The safeguards put in place were that he had to do visits out in the community, and have another adult with him. 8 months into the case, birth mom found out which relative was going to be the permanent option for N, and birth mom was unhappy, this relative had adopted 2 of 3 previous children she had lost rights to. Birth mom insisted she would now start her case plan, 8 months late, and in the meantime tried to get her own mother to get certified to get N (in other words, she didn't want N, she just didn't want the other relative to adopt her) The worker supported birth mom, instead of pushing for early permanency. At the 12 month review, N wrote a letter to the judge stating she wanted to live with the out of state relative. Birth mom did not have place to live, or had been appropriate enough to obtain unsupervised visits- all conversation had to be within earshot of the visit tech. Even still, the worker asked for an extension for birth mom's case plan. At the 12 month point, this poor child, did not want to live with her mother, she had the strength to tell the Judge and had the opportunity to be moved to a relative, and be reunited with her sisters. Instead the worker dragged out the case, N was forced to remain unsettled for another 3 months, start another school she knew she wouldn't be able to attend a full school year at instead of being with her adoptive placement and start the bonding, and attachment necessary to her healing. Every time we went to court and the Judge and Worker agreed to continue working with birth mom, N's heart would be crushed. All she wanted was to be with the family that wanted her.

Part 3:

T came to us in November, he is 2.5 years old, and we are his 4th foster home and he has been in Foster Care for 2 years. A year ago DHW decided to terminate the Parental Rights of his parents. A permanent home has yet to be selected for T, they are still searching for a relative placement for T. Three times the Dept. has had scheduled TPR Trial dates in 2015, none of which proceeded for different reasons. In the meantime, there is no end game plan for T to get a family. There is no guarantee the Judge will proceed with the next TPR trial, there is no set date for a selection committee to pick out an adoptive home (relative or non-relative) for T, there is no deadline the Dept is holding to stop searching for a

relative placement and seek out an adoptive home so T can have a family. So we wait and see. We are willing to be an adoptive placement for T and although we understand the relative placement policy, how long will they search before saying this child's need for a family now, for attachment now, for his healing now, is more important?

Story 6

I was placed with FOSTER CHILD at two days old April 28, 2013. He tested positive for methamphetamine. FOSTER CHILD's biological mom was inconsistent in her visits. After only four or five visits in his first five months she disappeared. FOSTER CHILD was not a typical foster. He did not leave our home several times a week for visits. FOSTER CHILD had a handful of visits with his biological father in January 2014 before he decided he did not want to pursue reunification. During his first year the department looked into family placements in Utah (maternal) and West Virginia (paternal). I had contact via email, phone and in person visits with FOSTER CHILD's aunt in Utah who decided not to pursue adoption of FOSTER CHILD because he already had a strong attachment with our family. In late April, early May 2014 I was informed by the department the Aunt in West Virginia did not want to adopt FOSTER CHILD. In May 2014 FOSTER CHILD's half sister was born and placed with our family, she also tested positive for methamphetamine. FOSTER CHILD and Jodie are 12 months and 3 weeks apart in age. There was an immediate and intense bond between these two babies. May 2014 also brought termination of parental rights in FOSTER CHILD's case and an adoption committee meeting was held to select our family for adoption. In September 2014 I received a phone call from the department that FOSTER CHILD was possibly Native American and we would now have to wait to hear from the Indian tribes before proceeding with his adoption. They also informed me they had contacted the Aunt in West Virginia and was told she now wanted to pursue adoption of FOSTER CHILD. At this point, FOSTER CHILD was 17 months old and had only known one family and one mother. He was completely bonded and attached to our family including my son, NATURAL SON as his sibling, and our extended family. One week later the department called and said central office had decided they would not allow the family in West Virginia to complete an ICPC as FOSTER CHILD's adoption selection had already been complete and he had been in one family for his entire life. In November 2014 on a conference call with several department workers I was informed the department had changed their minds and was requesting an ICPC from FOSTER CHILD's aunt in West Virginia. I was told there was no avenue to fight this decision. At this time FOSTER CHILD was 19 months old and had never had any contact with this family. One week later FOSTER CHILD and Jodie were removed from my home and placed for two months with another amazing foster mom. During our separation FOSTER CHILD stopped talking and signing. He was sad, anxious and confused and tried to self soothe with food. He often moaned and cried when with others. Upon their return to my home January 2015 FOSTER CHILD quickly returned to his happy self. The department funded four trips to Boise for FOSTER CHILD's Aunt. Every visit created more stress for FOSTER CHILD, especially when the department would restrict all contact between FOSTER CHILD and our family, and insisted we start calling him James. FOSTER CHILD became physically ill during or after each visit. In late November 2015 I was told FOSTER CHILD would be moving to West Virginia before Christmas. The department created a short five day transition between FOSTER CHILD's only home and family he had ever known and a hotel room with his Aunt. During Skype visits he has asked to come home. He asks repeatedly for Jodie, NATURAL SON, Grandma and other family members. He has gone from testing out of the infant toddler program to weekly speech therapy due to regression from the trauma caused by removing him from his family. FOSTER CHILD has no contact with his maternal

biological family and the department no longer requires the aunt to continue contact between FOSTER CHILD and NATURAL SON and I, his family since birth.

Story 7

To: Those helping to bring change to the Idaho Foster Care system

Our foster son was brought to our home at 2 months old. We fostered him for 25 months. During this time, we worked with multiple visit techs and safety/case/adoption workers from the Department of Health and Welfare.

Communication with our case worker was almost none existent. Between visits, needing vouchers, signatures for medical care, court dates, not to mention checking on how the child is doing, communication is important. Over 90% of our phone calls/emails to our case worker were NEVER returned. I reported to calling and emailing the supervisor, of all those times, I only received one call back. How are we supposed to care for this child well, when we cannot even get a call returned from his case worker? Vouchers could take up to 4 weeks after we requested them, case worker didn't show up to a specialist Dr appointment we needed him at, and we couldn't get him on the phone. It is our understanding foster parents we can come to court and have a couple minutes to update the judge on how the child is doing. The first time we went, we sat in the hall waiting (after talking to case worker) and were never called in. According to our CASA worker, who was in court, case worker never told the judge we were there.

Our foster son's pediatrician was recommending treatments that we knew were not suitable (we have past medical experience with other children). It took 4 months of horrible care before our case worker would agree to let us change Dr's. Bio Mom never came to a Dr visit or had a special interest in staying at this particular Dr. Visits that are hard. We understand the importance of visits, if reunification is going to happen, but by this time, when the visits were becoming traumatizing, neither parent were working their plan and the child had been in care for well over a year. Countless times I would get a phone call demanding I bring our foster son to the department within 15 minutes because Mom requested a visit. This would be after I was told visits would be on hold until parent met with the case worker due to 4-5 missed visits in a row. As our foster son got older and grew healthy attachments, when his Mom would have a visit he would be literally be torn from my arms, screaming. I asked that the visitation tech take him from me, as he transitioned from me to the tech better than me to bio mom, but my requests were denied and bio mom was brought with the tech when she came to pick up our foster son, causing undo stress for the child. This process can effect his attachments for years to come. After being in our family for 14 months, and meeting his bio dad, for the first time, for a 30 minute meeting, our foster son was forced to go to prison. He was taken to prison, by a social worker whom he had never met. The worker, who was a complete stranger to this 16 month old child, took him to a facility where he was patted down/searched and taken to visit a man whom he had no previous relationship with. This went on sporadically for 4 months. These visits caused trauma to this child that he couldn't voice, being 16-20 months old, but it was evident in his demeanor and emotional state. It is obviously traumatic to take a child away from his only consistent, safe place, but then add being taken by a person he has never met, in a car he's never been in, to a person he had no previous relationship with... it was no wonder that his behaviors were abnormal, aggressive and dramatic for 5-7 days after each visit. He would cling to me and not let me out of his sight, not sleep well, become paranoid, and scared of everything. Even others outside of our family (occupational therapists, friends who regularly see us) noticed the changes in him

days after visits. I'll never forget when we had to get a rental car. As we approached the car and got in he started screaming in terror. He thought we were sending him away. Each time his case worker/permanency worker came for their monthly home visit, as soon as he saw them (once he learned how to say 'no') he would say 'no no no' and cling to me, afraid they were going to take him away.

Story 8

My husband and I became foster parents in 2012. After participating in PRIDE training, we were so excited to become a part of something much bigger than ourselves, especially since the training emphasized that we would be part of a team that would work together for the well being of children in foster care. PRIDE also emphasized the importance of continuity, stability, and permanence for these especially vulnerable children.

The following year we fostered an infant. He came to us as a newborn, directly from the hospital. Several months went by and a woman from Oregon came forward, saying she wanted Baby D. She had previously adopted two (of eight) of Baby D's biological siblings. We voiced our concerns to the department, which included the fact that Baby D had bonded to us, as well as the fact that the family in Oregon had five children in the home, two of whom were under the age of five and both had FAS (one with severe handicaps requiring constant medical attention and multiple therapies) as did Baby D. We were concerned that his needs could not be adequately met. The GAL assigned to the case began to express similar concerns to the department, as did the county prosecutor. At that point, the department completely turned on us. They were openly rude and disrespectful to us, though we had only ever politely, respectfully tried to talk through our concerns with them. They refused to work with the GAL at all; the situation became so difficult that the GAL was given an attorney to represent him in hearings. During that time, we did everything the caseworker asked us to do, including extremely difficult interactions with the family in Oregon. When we asked the caseworker to please help us facilitate appropriate visitations with the other family, she told us to 'figure it out ourselves since we were adults'.

When Baby D was nine months old, the courts granted the department's request to have him placed in the home in Oregon; however, since it was over state lines, the department could not actually move Baby D to their home until another hearing could be scheduled to get approval for an out-of-state placement. Workers on the case were so angry and frustrated by that time, and their treatment of us became a terrible reflection of that. They grew tired of waiting for the out of state approval to move Baby D, so they abruptly removed him from our home and placed him in a foster home hours away from us. He had never met that foster family. He had only ever lived with us and was absolutely and completely attached to us. There was zero attention given to how this would affect this little person, to one day just be removed from his family and never see them again, and be placed with total strangers, all for expediency! The department would only to have waited two-three weeks, and Baby D could have at least been spared what must have been exceptionally painful and frightening. All I have been able to think about in the two years since, is how utterly abandoned he must have felt. My heart is forever broken for him, and the unnecessary pain he has suffered.

We did not continue as foster parents afterwards, even though many in the department said we were

among the best foster parents they had, and they wanted us to stay. We could no longer participate in a system that bullied its way over foster families, court appointed guardians, and the very children they claimed to care for.

Story 9

Our son was placed in our home at 4 months of age. His mother had passed away that day and his family asked to have him placed in foster care. Within a short time a family from out of state expressed interest in adopting him. The department worked hard to make the move. He went to live with them after being in our home for 5 months. Three months later I received a call from the adoptive family saying they were not going to adopt him and were bringing home back to Idaho in a few days. I stated, he is coming home to us. This is when I was told the department had found another adoptive family. I was stunned that this was the first I was hearing this. I promptly called the case worker. She informed me that indeed another family had been chosen. I asked why we had not been asked if we would like to adopt. She said she had spoken to our licensing worker and understood that we never intended to adopt. I explained that we did not go in to foster care with that intent. However, given the situation we would like the opportunity to adopt him. I was told the decision was already mad and it was too late. My heart was broken. My husband and I discussed the situation that evening and decided I would call our licensing worker in the morning. We both felt strongly that he needed to be with us. We couldn't stand the thought of him having to go to another home. I called our worker. I expected her to know why I was calling. She seemed confused. I explained what had taken place. She told me that she had not talked to the case worker. At that point she offered to take our case to her boss and above. Over the next day and a half meeting were had. I received a call from the case worker saying he could come home to us. BUT...not to think that it means we will be allowed to adopt him. I expressed how happy I was he didn't have to go to another home. She told me he wouldn't remember us. She even asked if we had any animals. I said, yes a dog. She said, good he will remember the dog.

Two days later our son came home. As soon as he saw me he reached for me. My daughter and I gave him a bath that night. When I took him out of the bathtub he said "mama" for the first time. Remember he is a year old! He had never said that before. I knew then he knew who I was.

The first time the case worker came to the house after our son came home she dropped a bomb that he has 12 year old half-brother. This had never come up the five months he was with us before. She explained that if we didn't agree to visits they probably would not allow us to adopt him. This was the tone for the next 9 months until the adoption was final.

Now to do my best to explain the impact this has had on our son and family. When he came back home he had skin issues that he did not have prior. He had an open sore the size of a quarter on his back that the other family was treating with steroids. It would not heal. Our dermatologist said that it was due to stress/anxiety. We now have three different kinds of creams to use when he has flares. It took about a year to resolve the initial skin issues. Now the pop up here and there.

The biggest thing we noticed when he came home was there was no light in his eyes. (this is where it gets hard to explain on paper) He had no emotions. Our friend, who has a child with RAD looked at him

and said she would not allow anyone to touch him. She explained he needed to attach. We limited him being around people other than our immediate family for six months. If we were going out I always wore him in a carrier. We didn't let anyone else hold him. I did all of his care. It was exhausting. This was very difficult given the fact that our other two children were teenagers. Going to school, church, and other events as a family was a thing of the past. The results were slow. He did not start showing emotion until he was 3.

Our son was enrolled in the infant toddler program until he aged out at three. At that time they said he would not qualify for the preschool at the school. We agreed and sent him to a private preschool. This is when we saw his attachment issues. The preschool was not able to understand or deal with his "quirks". In order to feel secure, he attaches himself to objects. He would always want the same car. Therefore, they hid his favorite car which took his security away. This had snowball effect. We decided to take him out of preschool and seek professional help. He began seeing play therapist once a week. The therapist recommended that we had a neuropsych test done. The therapist worked with me and our son on teaching him emotions. He could not tell you how he felt. He always said he was happy. And he had no idea that other people had emotions other than happy. We also worked on correct behavior with strangers. He would ask to get in strangers cars. And touch people at the grocery store. He still struggles with strangers. She explained to me that he is emotionally half his chronological age. We worked on what that looks like and how to deal with that in daily life. We saw this therapist for 1 ½ years.

In that time when he was 4 we enrolled him in different preschool. This preschool only had six children. There were two teachers. It was difficult for the teachers with him. They were understanding with him and made it work. He is now in kindergarten. He is doing better than I expected. Yet, he is on a 504 and is defiantly not emotionally with the other children. He often does not want me to leave because he doesn't think I will come back. It is heart breaking. I reassure him that mommy always comes back.

Daily life is so different. Going to the store he needs to know he will be safe and I will not leave him there. He has to know when will daddy be coming home. Are brother and sister ever going to come back from college? When we take a trip he asks if we are going to leave him there? Or is someone else going to be living in our house when we get home? He has often told me he didn't like being a baby that it was scary. When his siblings have friends over he tells them he loves them and cries when they leave. (this is getting better, still a work in progress) He asks me daily who parent helper will be in his classroom. (he always needs to be reminded he is safe).

Family vacations go like this: the way there he wants to go home, the first night he doesn't sleep, the next day he doesn't want to leave the room, that night he throws up before going to sleep. If the trip is longer than two-night he doesn't want to go back home.

Story 10

We got the call to take 2 ½ year old, identical twin boys in to our foster home in May 2007. Approximately 3 months later the caseworker asked us to consider adoption as the biological parents were failing to meet their goals on the case plan. After family discussions and prayer our family was excited to say "yes" to being the boys' permanent placement. However, at about 15 months in to the case it was decided that the boys would be reintroduced and transitioned to their biological parents. Right from the beginning of a visitation schedule, we knew things weren't right. We suspected drug use

and reported it. However; 17 months later they were placed back with the biological parents, along with their little brother who had been in the same foster home since birth and was now 22 months old (he knew no other parents). They also had an older sister who was also living in the home. My husband and I forged a relationship with the biological parents determined to mentor them for the better of the boys and their siblings. Sadly within months they were evicted from their apartment. We got word that drugs were still an issue. The parents allowed us visits and even asked us to babysit and do a few overnight visits on some weekends. We bought food, clothes, and shoes for the boys, hoping to improve the situation. The mother seemed increasingly mentally unstable and we suspected spousal abuse based on stories the boys would tell us when staying with us and the injuries their mother had such as bruises, black eyes, and knocked out tooth. Their trailer smelled of feces, as there apparently was issue with their septic. The twins entered kindergarten and they missed so much school that they had to be transferred to a special class because they had gotten so far behind. Apparently getting them to school by noon for ½ day of school was too much for the parents who complained they were overwhelmed. Finally 14 months after being placed back with the parents we got word that they were being placed back into foster care with us. I already was babysitting them that night at my home. The judge was to sign the order the next day and they would reenter into foster care at our home. However, the biological grandmother saw me the boys at the store, and took them out of my cart and left with them, angry that I was being allowed to babysit. The caseworker told me that she would go get them the next day after the order was signed and bring them to us. That never happened. The caseworker decided to place with biological grandparents despite the fact that she previously had allowed visitation with the parents without the approval of the department and had a previous arrest record for injury to a child. In addition, the department hired an attachment specialist to see where they had parental attachment and it was found they had attachment with us, none the less they were placed with the grandparents and adoption was to take place December 2010. They lived with the biological grandparents for a full year before she was arrested on DUI charges with a child in the car who was not belted (not one of the twins or little brother). The DUI charges came five day prior to the final adoption court date. They were finally placed back with us following the arrest and later adopted. However, the department's handling of the case left as many emotional and mental scars on the children as what the parents had done!! They are now 11 years and still struggle with nightmares and abnormal fears for boys their age. One of them struggled to self regulate requiring counseling. The other one pulled his hair and eyelashes out due to anxiety. They both have had counseling as a result of the trauma of the department forcing a sibling bond by placing them all together for 2 years with the end result of them being back in the foster homes they started at and the sister still living with the biological grandparents. They were very behind in school because of all the missed kindergarten and lack of help while with the grandparents. It took 3 years of hard work to get them up to grade level. During their time with the parents they witnessed and can recall, drugs use, drug manufacturing, the selling of drugs, and domestic violence. During their time with the grandparents they were locked in the basement for punishment, the biological mother was allowed to come and go as she pleased, leaving them very insecure about when they would see her next. At one point she lived in the basement of the grandparents house, though the boys were told not to tell anyone. One of them has memories of pornography movies being played in the homes. All of this could have been prevented by requiring the parents to follow every part the case plan and following up to make sure it was truly being done. At one court date the father lied about the mom completing drug rehab (which she had left before completing) and lied on why he was unable to keep a job. The facts were easy to follow up on but yet the department chose not to present

the fact or follow up on said stories. It sickens me to know that these beautiful twin boys had to endure so much beyond what they had already gone through just because the department was so determined to reunify and then later place with biological family. Obviously the decisions made WERE NOT in the best interest of any of the children in this case and there it has left scars. Please call me with any further questions on our case. I am happy to do whatever it takes to assist in changing the laws as to reduce the amount of trauma kids must endure.

Story 11

We got a call from the Department of Health and Welfare when C was about two weeks old. They informed us that he was in the NICU and born addicted to drugs. For the next two and half weeks we visited the NICU every day spending hours holding and helping him feel nurtured and safe. The nurses were astounded at how quickly he began to show improvement. "All he needed was a little love," they told us. Home health nurses would visit our home the next few months of his life monitoring his progress. They credited his rapid recovery to a safe, loving, and nurturing home. We felt good about the service we were able to render this little boy. C made a full recovery and within two weeks after coming to our home was off the drug-weaning medication.

Early on it was reported to us that an out of town relative had been selected to adopt C in the event that his mom's rights were terminated. While we would have loved to adopt C, we were in support of the relative. We facilitated multiple skype visits each week as well as monthly visits when the relative would come into town.

While C was an infant, these week -long visits at the hotel worked well. As the child got older he began to return from these visits more and more disturbed and aggressive. We reported these reactions to the caseworker with the hope that a modification to the visits would be explored to better ease C through the transition process. The department ignored our request and concerns. After firmly stating the need for them to evaluate how they were conducting the visits our case -worker threatened to remove C from our home if we couldn't support the department's decisions. We felt alarmed that the department was unwilling to make minor adjustments to accommodate C's changing needs.

Shortly afterwards, when C was 14 months old he went to his usual visit with his birth mom. When we said goodbye to him that morning we had no idea the grief we would experience that day. At the time he should have returned from his visit we were informed that he would not be returning to our home but was to be placed in another foster home. We were sick inside. Sick for what C was thinking. Where was he? Was he scared? Was he confused? Did he think that we did not care about him? What was going through his mind? These questions haunted us. While he was not our literal son, we felt as much concern for him as we would one of our own children.

After 14 months of living with the people he believed to be family, the department knowingly, purposefully, and premeditatively severed that bond. We found out later, that a week before they removed C from our home, a group of supervisors met and decided to remove him without any notice to us, the birth mom, or the guardian. They did that knowing full well, in violation of their own research and internal protocols, how devastating it is on a child to have those bonds disrupted.

From the Idaho Child Protection manual it states, "We now know that multiple moves can break the bonds of trust and attachment formed by the child. Consequently, multiple moves harm the child. Multiple moves compound the original trauma of abuse and neglect, often leading to long term adjustment and attachment difficulties." And knowing all this, they removed C to another foster home.

In the months following, the reasons they gave for taking C from our home changed many times. We met with the department after this decision pleading with them to place the child back in our home for C's own sake, which they rejected. Through facebook the new foster mom contacted me wondering how to care for C and his special needs. She shared how he was feeling and doing and described a boy that we did not recognize; inward, sad, empty, sullen, withdrawn. Those words did not describe the boy we knew. C was vibrant, cheery, goofy, fun loving, happy and excited about life. Everyone that knew him called him the happiest baby they had ever seen. He was always smiling and full of energy.

Even though the department has removed C from our home, C still feels and thinks that we're his family. It is the height of arrogance that a bureaucracy thinks they can terminate a meaningful relationship with an order. Just because they made that relationship end didn't mean it ended for C. He has suffered and continues to suffer because of it. C is still in the state and still living with his other foster family. We have been privileged to get to know them. As wonderful as they are, C knows who we are and continues to feel a strong connection to us. These bonds are real and when they are broken there are real consequences. We currently continue to support C the best we can. For the last five months, once or twice a week we take C for a day. My husband takes work off, the kids forego their usual schedules and we spend that entire day with C. We drive him back in the evening, hand him to the foster family, and have to look into his eyes as he cries and reaches for us.

And then we walk away.

Story 12

Sadness, confusion, and melancholy marked our foster son's mood after he was abruptly moved from his original foster family. For three weeks, we wondered if the flat affect we were witnessing was his true personality. The day we saw him reunited for a quick visit with his former family was one that told us the true story of his disposition. His face lit up and his eyes boasted a sparkle we had not yet seen. The unbreakable bond we witnessed between them brought tears to our eyes, and a lump to our throat.

Breaking these important bonds is damaging to a child's psyche. We witnessed this first hand. We watched our foster son lash out with tantrums, experience sleepless nights as he tried to adjust, and struggle to establish a trusting relationship with our family.

We were privy to information through his former family that gave us insight into the type of toddler he had been before coming to our home, and we were shocked at what we were witnessing. A little boy was taken from a loving, safe environment, for reasons that were important to the Department of Health and Welfare. And, all we could see was the pain and bewilderment on our foster son's face. He didn't ask to be removed abruptly from the only family he had known. He didn't understand the reasons given to us by his Caseworker. He didn't get a say in his surroundings. And it showed.

I am able to report that our foster son is adjusting to our family, and has formed an attachment to us after 5 hard months. We have had to work overtime to help those vital connections form. I see distrust in his eyes when we introduce him to new people, as if he is wondering who will take him next. I have held him as he cried in confusion during the night. I have observed him fall to the floor and hit his head repeatedly in extreme frustration. And, in these moments, I have worked to encourage healing and attachment. We now see a sparkle in his eye when we walk in the room. When his chubby little hands hold our own, and he snuggles into our neck, we breathe a huge sigh of relief. It hasn't been perfect; in fact, it's been a tragic experience. But, we are committed to loving him back to a place of normalcy. - What is astounding is that when his former foster family comes in the room, it's almost as if we don't exist. The bond they share is incredible, and I know he misses them terribly.

We are unsure what the rest of his life looks like, but we hope we have helped to lessen the horrible effect that his abrupt removal might have on him down the road.

Story 13

My story is heartbreaking, as so many are:

My husband and I have been married almost twenty years we have five boys ages 8 to 18.

Three years ago thru much thinking and talking to the kids and really having a heart for our community we decided to become foster parents in Idaho, we really had a desire to bring a baby girl in, in hopes to adopt.

In July of 2013 we received a call about a baby girl R , little R had been taken from her grandmother at two weeks old who had her since birth, she did not comply with state rules I was told, grandma was also raising three other grandchildren.

Little R was born into the system to a mother who knew she would not get her to take home due to drug use and other things, this baby was the result of an affair the mother had on her husband, she had three siblings that were from both the same mom and dad.

I picked her up and I took her home, the next three months I adjusted to being a mom of a precious baby girl that we took as one of our own, during this time she had a bio logical father who would be allowed with his mother to visit once a week at the office, I drove her to and from these appointments never asked for money anything, I had a great relationship with this dad and her mother, they loved this baby but they knew she was happy and healthy and the most bright eyed little girl, they both desired to have her stay with us, the grandmother wanted to be a part of her life but wasn't capable of raising her, the father was unstable and moved around a lot as well as had a drug addiction so he wasn't able to take her or care for her., at about the three month mark the biological mother decided to have a one hour visit with her, this continued for a couple visits and then she didn't show for many more months, she moved out of state and then moved back, very unstable not moving forward with trying to conform to the rules to get her child back. She saw her approximately 5 to 7 times for one hour each time the first year of her life. The father had told the state workers that he wanted our family to keep her, the grandmother saw the great bond and realized we were her family and wanted us to keep her.

There was an issue, the grandparent on the mothers side , they wanted to place her and were bound to place her with a blood relative, mind you, the whole time that we had baby R this grandmother and grandfather had not showed interest, I had taken her on a visit once in that year on thanksgiving day to see them and spend two hours there, I picked her up and life continued as normal, she very much was our little rose our beautiful baby girl, she met her milestones and was so happy and healthy, it was two weeks before her first birthday we were informed she would be leaving, be transitioning to her grandmother, the one who had three others that were siblings, the family that she did not know. I had never left this baby in the almost year I had had her, I was her mama, and my boys where her siblings, we started with a day care type schedule I'd drop her off and I'd pick her up, she went there five days a week, she was very distraught when I would leave her and pick her up, she started to really with drawl I saw it, she had a blank stare, she started waking at night instead of sleeping thru the night, she would holler mama mama and I'd have to hold her to sleep, she was sad and looked lost, it broke my heart. They this process I had talked to my case worker as well as the head people about my concern, we had a group meeting and basically said are u going to follow our plan or not, they didn't once listen to our concern for this baby girl, they instead accused us of not setting up visits to her grandparents, they told us that in that almost year they thought she was seeing her grandparents and was having visits, there was so many lies, they treated us as garbage and disregarded anything we said, I watched as they would do things right before court dates so that the judge would not know what was going on. It was awful.

A week after her first birthday I packed up her beautiful pink nursery in her brand new house we had built to send her to an uk own place and leave her, to say goodbye forever, I had to take her to the grandparents house and drop her off with all her things and say my goodbye and watch her face as she knew something was wrong she started biting her lip all the time and the bright eyes were now sad eyes, I said my goodbye and handed her over and I will never forget that feeling of knowing that I had to leave my baby, she didn't understand why she would never agin see her mama, everything she lived and knew was gone and I will never get over it, the effects it had on not only her but on our family and my boys was everlasting to this day, it caused so much heartbreak.

My prayer is that this broken system would once again place the child's best interest in mind as the choices they make have lasting attachment issues for these children, foster parents are the only voice that they have. We need to be able to be heard. Our children are more then a number that looks good on paper when reunified with a blood relative, what about the best interest in that child.

This is just one of the heart breaking stories we have.

Story 14

The date you received the child. How long the child remained with you? - We were called by our social worker on November 28, 2007 to take him in at the age of 1 day. Child was in the hospital where we visited each day until he was able to come home with us at 9 days old. He stayed with us until one month before his second birthday.

The date the child was removed from your home. - He remained in our home until October 30, 2009, when the department gave us 3 hours to deliver him to his "new family". We then drove him to H&W in CDA where we delivered him to complete strangers and were given one hour to give the new family information about "our baby" and then were asked to leave.

The reason the department gave for removing the child. - The department told us that another family had been chosen to adopt him at the adoption selection committee. One month prior to the adoption selection committee meeting we attended his parental termination hearing and were asked under oath if it was our intention to adopt him. This was absolutely our intention and our understanding as we moved forward. This was also the plan the department had given us.

Did you receive the child back into your care? If so, why? If not, why not? Yes, we received the child back in our care exactly one day short of 6 months later. We were told the other family were having personal issues and were unable to continue with adoption. Moving him back into our home was not what we expected. During the time he was gone we filed motions to have him returned, we went to the media including several radio stations, 3 local newspapers and a local television station. During this time the department was given a gag order and both the department and CASA refused to talk to us. We were also turned away several times when trying to renew our home study.

Are you aware of any repercussions that have come to the child because of the actions of the department. - He suffers ADHD, PTSD, and RAD, all of which come with many repercussions of their own. CHILD struggles at school and socially.

Where is the child today? Is there any information about the child that would help us understand how they have been affected? - He is in our home since the other family gave him back to the department, although the other family was unaware he would be moved back into our home. Attached testing and plan from counselor.

Story 15

I am so thankful someone is trying to take a stand for foster parents. I was a foster parent for about 9 years for just over 20 kids. However, after experiencing a non-caring attitude from so many case workers and department heads, I wasn't able to continue. I could not stand back and watch them NOT care for my foster children. Anytime the kids needed something, they wouldn't respond. When abuse was suspected and reported to the Dept, I couldn't believe they never did anything about it. Time after time, month after month, child after child, I watched the Dept destroy these kids. It broke my heart! I so wish I could have continued being a foster parent. After a grueling two years, many promises made and broken, and by the grace of God, I was finally able to adopt my first foster placement. He is the joy of my life. I just wonder how many others could have turned out the same way if things would have been different. I could never be a foster parent again and that's sad. We have so much to offer to a child. We need change!

Story 16

As being raised in foster care, living with several different families through out the years, there were good experiences, but then some very bad ones! I learned how to adjust to different aspects of life, as each family has different dynamics, expectation, food, ect.... Then on top of that, you always wonder how long you will be there. You learn not to keep anything as you can not take much with you. The greatest desire is to be loved and accepted, no matter what, but so many of the foster parents do not know exactly what kind of behaviors they will have to deal with..... And instead of helping the child, they choose to move them out..... So as that result, the child learns once again not to trust.....now years later, I have learned it is OK to have material things, I still have trust issues and relationship issues.

I did have a couple of families that wanted to adopt me....my birth mother and father refused to allow the adoption to happen.

The most important thing you could do for the children placed in foster care..... Is security!!! The only reason for a child to be moved out is abuse of any form! Never because the social worker decides that there is too much of a connection.... We need these kids to come out of a horrible situation as healthy, physically and mentally healthy adults!

Story 17

Foster care reform,

I recently had the opportunity to speak with one of your representatives who encouraged me to write my story, to bring to light the damages caused by State Institutions and Foster Care. I am sorry for the extent and nature of this matter. I also know that together as a body in Christ, this will be reformed.

When I was a young child, my mother was involved in a fatal car accident. With nowhere else to turn I was placed into the custody of Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, splitting up my siblings. As the years went by and the houses kept changing, I was left to wonder, why does this keep happening? Doesn't anyone care? With all these questions running through my mind and the continual change in locations, I was left to believe that I must be the reason for all this movement or relocations. While in the custody of IDHW, around age 16 I was placed into a foster home which was to be the location where I would "age out." While in this final home I was involved in a major car accident and suffered a severe brain injury. After months in the hospital and to my surprise, I was returned to the same foster home I was previously placed (the best thing to have happen) To make a very long and hard story a bit more bearable, I have firsthand knowledge and am the result of continual damage of being relocated and not having the security of being kept with a family, to build a family connection, to feel accepted and loved. The results are unbearable still to today, over 20 years later.

If I can be of any more assistance please feel free to contact me. Thank you and God bless.

Story 18

Please keep my name and phone number confidential . The date I received the 4 out of 6 children was [REDACTED] 2012, They were with us for 18 and half months . They took them away [REDACTED] 2013. I have seen the state do a lot of bad choices for children in the 8 years we were foster parents | I know what you are going through I had 4 children that the state told me and the 4 kids that my home was going to be there forever home ! also we had done the home study and all the adoption paper work to make this happen . They took them on [REDACTED] 2013 and gave them to a unsafe Family environment due to this family isn't blood but they had adopted there brother the last time the kids were in foster care . this family they placed my kids with never tried to get them from day one when they came into care this time . the family knew the night these kids came into care and never contacted the state to try and get them . The permanency social worker contacted them [REDACTED] 2013 and that is when our nightmare started . the department even went against the judges orders that they could not consider that family for permanency. I had my four for 18 and half months . I need to Add that the 4 foster children I had Three of the 4 where removed Twice a few years ago when they were in care another time From the family they have placed them with also that family sent one of the three away

twice because they did not want him because they could not keep him under control . the reason the fourth child wasn't removed from them was because she wasn't born yet . would you please get a hold of me when you have time . I would be happy to help there is a lot more to my story that I have not shared .

Story 19

We met with the Department and they really can't tell us why they took the children from our home and placed them in a home where they are sure to endure a life of abuse and neglect. We loved them and cared for them for two years, ten months, and seven days. We were promised we would be allowed to adopt them, but that never happened. The head of IDHW can't possibly conceive that the case workers made an error as he stated he has been up and down this state and none of his social workers would ignore children on their case loads. My claim was no one has ever talked to these children about how they are, what they want, or even knew them. The Department would not make such a horrific mistake. He feels our experience is not typical of how people feel about the department. He said he knew the workers involved personally and they would never harm children. We were promised so many things and we did everything asked of us. The children ages 3 and 6 knew us as their family. They were told by the caseworker we would be adopting them, but it didn't happen because Supervisors who never met the children decided a distant cousin should adopt the kids. We reached out to the dept heads, the governor otter, his wife, senators, and lawyers. No one could help us the state went against the Judges ruling to not remove the children, but that didn't matter to the dept. the CASA was also in our side, but hi opinion didn't matter either. We got one visit with the children they begged to come home, I can still feel my little boys sobs on my chest as the case worker told him no. My little girl asked if i would go to the cemetery and put flowers on her grave to remember her. I later ran into her at school she asked me if I was still trying to bring her home, and that her new Mom and the department told her we were the bad guys and she couldn't hug me anymore. Later that week I got a letter from the department that I was not allowed to have any contact. When we see their sad faces at Walmart we have to look away, just because we didn't agree with the department to change their permanency plan. The children are doing poorly in school and are treated poorly by their new family, but the department doesn't care. They have no interest in doing what is best for children. Case workers told me if they disagree with a supervisor they could lose their jobs. There are no checks and balances, new legislation protecting our most vulnerable is long over due. Not a day goes by, that I don't think of those children and what that little boy was thinking when he begged me not to give him away. I didn't have a choice.

Story 20

they took my grandson from my daughter, he was born with feeding issues and put on feeding tube and then took him straight from the hospital for what they called "failure to thrive" then they put the mom on a child neglect registry which gets her fired from her job she worked at for 3 years and now cant find a job because of it, and because of that they say shes unstable and gave the baby to her ex. so CPS does take kids away from perfectly good parents for NO GOOD REASON. and IF we could afford an attorney she would of won this case but its all about whos got the \$ to fight it and he did and won. THIS WHOLE TITLE IV FUNDING is the whole reason CPS exists. it needs to be overhauled and kids given back to the good parents. if you want more info ill be glad to step up and tell the story. so will my daughter. dont even get me started with the corruption in that department. its been 2 years since ive seen my grandbaby and they left it up to her ex to give her supervised visits till the baby is 18 but its up to him when its convenient for him to let her see him which will prob be never from emoticonhow sad they have that power.

Story 21

The complete story of how I ended up in foster care is lengthy but will try and explain in a shorter version. If you feel you need additional information please contact me. I have been speaking out for years but has always fell on deaf ears. When I was about a year old my father obtained full custody of both my sister and I. She was about two and half. We moved several hundred miles away for work. He worked rotating shifts because of the work he did. Two weeks each, days, nights and graveyard. Due to this schedule he met a family that was willing to help him take care of us. They set up an arrangement where us kids would stay with this family during the week and with our dad on the weekends and he could visit whenever. This arrangement worked well and continued for about five years until we were seven and nine and he died in a work related accident. According to the court documents I've obtained, an aunt decided she wanted us and within a month and a half CPS opened and closed our case granting her full guardianship with the exception that we would get to spend part of our summers with the other family. Our new gaurdian took it upon herself not to follow the court order after the first summer visit. We were told they didn't want us to come any

more and that they didn't love us but only wanted us for our trust funds. Also, in the document from CPS it clearly states they had no intention of following up on us after the guardianship was granted. I began running away within the first year of placement and was returned several times by police and told to be a good girl and that I should be thankful I had such a caring family that loved me and a beautiful house to live in. They like so many others wouldn't listen to me, I was just a child and didn't know what was best for me. Even at age seven I knew I didn't like to listen, watch or be the target of the abuse that when on in that house. Even at a young age I knew it wasn't a healthy environment. My sister and I never experienced that kind of behavior with our father or the other family we lived with. It wasn't until several years later that CPS agreed to become involved again, which seemed to take an act of congress. My sister ran away and reached out to the other family for help and they stepped up knowing they could get in trouble with the law. They drove hundreds of miles to pick her up and then filed for custody for both of us. When we went to court the judge CHOSE reject all of our allgations toward our guardian and her family even though she admitted to them in court or at least she admitted to it after she tried to down play everything. According to the court document, she stated that refused to let us live with this other family and if we did not want to live with her she would allow us to be placed into foster care but also stipulated to the court only if it was in the ADA county court jurisdiction. We still chose not to live with her so the judge granted her wish and punished us by placing us into separate foster homes with her guidelines of it being in ADA county. We never lived together again and the separation separated us to a degree. However, I must note that though we were now in the states custody she retained guardianship over our trust funds which meant we never escaped her because we had to go to her for anything, lunch money, school clothes, etc.

I forgot to add that due to their spite and unwillingness to state the fact that they were wrong about where they placed us. They not only punished us by placing us in foster care but it also took two spots away from two other children who needed them. Also, I inherited several documents which is how I know some of the things that I am sure wasn't meant for me to ever see.

Sahred via Facebook Comment:

Cricket Syes

I was a foster child. I will spare you and my cell phone the Kleenex & tears of my up bringing and the final straw that resulted me being a ward of the state.

I was placed October 1980, I was 12 years old. Came from a house of mentally, physical, and sexual abuse. This was my second time in foster care, first time I was in CO, as an infant to toddler. 35+ years later I'm dealing with issues resulting from the choice H&W made for me.

I didn't realize how raw the pain was until I talked yesterday for the first time about my experience. I then started to read all these similar stories. I am so sorry to those that didn't get one home placement or the love of great foster parent. My heart goes out to you. I am one of the few & far between children of IDHW system that was left in one home. I was told end goal was to reunite me with birth mother, but I was never given an end date from what I remember. I was never sent back home, and my foster family wanted to adopt me. It was denied!!!With everything my foster family did to treat me as one of their own, there was always limitations & restrictions on me set by the state. My foster parents hands were tied by does & don'ts set by ID H&W. The simplest thing of spending the night at someones house, or

going on a trip with them had to get approval. After 6 years with my foster family I never really felt like I belong there, was a part of their family. Believe me they tried. I always felt like I was in limbo.... I never knew if I was coming or going, there was always court hearing & meeting. I'm assuming I timed out of

the system about the time I walked away from the home. I rebelled and started my long path of life hard knocks. I always had this deep gut feeling of being loved, wanted, belonging.... My own family.

Finally, I understand why I've felt this deep down feeling all these years. It's not just me.

Name withheld

I hope that this stays anonymous, but I want this situation to be heard about and fixed for the kids of the future...The bad news was that I was a drug addict who lost her son to Idaho Foster Care. The day I was in court in regards to my custody of him, I had a case worker for H&W walk up to me before court and tell me that the only way my Mom would be able to keep in contact with the family would be for me to sign over my rights. The lady left the court room before the judge arrived for court. I was hysterical when the judge was walking me through the proceedings. H&W had filled the adoptive parents heads with lies that I was on drugs during my pregnancy of him and that's why he supposedly behaved the way he did. (I started using when my son was 6 months old). They never tried talking to his father. They had no interest in finding him either.

Due to the lies and pulling my son from one family to another, he has been diagnosed with reactive attachment disorder and sociopath behavior. In fact, Channel 7 had his story of his disappearance from a group home in Marsing. He had left there because the family that had adopted him, had left him at the group home and went back to S. Carolina without him. The state convinced the family to bring him to S.C. with them about 6 months after leaving him.

The adoptive parents asked me for advice on helping him with his anger issues about and towards me. When I suggested that he and I meet in a controlled environment, they told me that their advisors said it would only hurt him more.

The good news is that I have been clean and sober since 2002 and I am married (to a Correctional Officer). I turned my life around.

I am scared of what the Foster Care may have created within my son, whom will be 18 years old in April of this year. I am slightly concerned that he is going to come looking for me for the wrong reasons.....
ALL THANKS TO THE IDAHO FOSTER CARE SYSTEM.....

Debbie Wood

I know foster parents want rights but why don't we get the whole Idaho System changed. We need laws to make the Judges of Idaho do their jobs and not let CPS be the sole deciding party in these cases. A social worker for CPS should not be able to decide a case. We need to get Idaho to have open family court. We need to get Idaho to have lawyers to represent the kids instead of this joke of a system they have in place now with Family Advocates/Guardian ad litem.

Desirée Hennessey

This happened to us here in Utah..

We passed a bill hb170 in 2010 so foster kids could not be removed after they achieved family relationships unless there was abuse or to return them to their bio family.

I'm so sorry.

Candee Gilbertson Whiting

My heart has been broken again reading these heart wrenching stories of these babes being abused again and again by the health and welfare..... The social workers, the courts, the foster parents all know if a biologic parent is reformable or not!!!! Protect these children and stop the abuse!

Joan Simmons

Idaho's foster care system definitely needs reform.

The goal is finding children homes not ripping them from the only home they know unless there are reasons that the foster family broke law. The kids aren't pawns in a chess game.

I write this with a heavy heart. It is difficult to attempt to summarize my family's experience with the Idaho Foster Care System. We became foster parents three years ago. I worked full time at a Boise psychiatric hospital on the adolescent girl's unit. This was how I came to know about the problem in our society of teenage girls with behavioral and mental health issues having absolutely no where to go. I was astonished to discover that teenage girls were the most difficult to place in foster care. Basically, no one, not even foster families would take them. This became heavy on my heart and after discussing it with my husband we decided to become part of the solution. This was our motivation in becoming foster parents.

Subsequent our first placement of a seventeen year old girl we decided to go to work for a company called PATH. PATH foster parents are the highest level of foster care. It is a full time job that I became very passionate about. I gave up my job at the hospital and became a full time foster parent for up to two girls at a time. Throughout this time we had seven different girls placed with us from anywhere from a few days to permanently.

In July 2014 I met the sixteen year old girl that would change my life. My husband and I have three grown children and four grandchildren and had no intention whatsoever of adopting. This young lady who I will call Leilani, blew into our world with all of her behaviors, emotional turmoil, mental illnesses and the world's most beautiful laughter. and she stole our hearts. I went to every therapy session with her, every doctors appointment, every social worker meeting, every court hearing, (and there were many because she frequently broke the law by running away and stealing) yet through it all I saw how deeply she needed us. Her biological

mother was given over five years to get her back and failed on all accounts. I remember her last hearing regarding this and she asked the judge if she could speak to me. She stated in front of everyone how grateful she was to have me as her "Mom".

Leilani had run away six times. Each time she would assure the police that she had a wonderful home life but sometimes she just had to run. We understood and hung onto her. At one point my husband was rather burnt out from all the running away and two social workers sat in our living room and basically begged us to take her back. We did. I remember the social worker saying to me, "You wouldn't give up on your birth child would you?"

cynlimary@gmail.com

We were submitted and approved as the adoptive family. We even had the judge chosen to do the adoption. Judge "O" in Caldwell who is a magnificent man.

The last 8 months or so we have had some marital issues. I know now that having a teenage girl with such issues can wear on a family. But that was ok, she was still our daughter to us. Regardless, at one point we were considering a separation and spoke openly about this to Leilani and the social worker. We were told the department of Health and Welfare would not take her from us. In November 2015 Leilani ran away again. A few days later I received a call from her social worker that Leilani was to be removed from our home. Apparently there had been a meeting which we were not invited to be a part of, and the decision was made. All that was told to me as a reason was that she had accused me of being a drug addict (I have 18 sobriety) and that my husband had warrants. Both of these accusations are easily enough checked out. However, I was instructed that when she came home I was to call him and he would move her to another home. I still remember the look on her face when she opened her bedroom door and asked, "Am I going to another home?" Instant despair.

Subsequent our foster daughter being removed, I called the social worker and was in tears. I stated, "You took my daughter." He replied rather indignantly, "You are not her mother. She is not your daughter. You are her therapeutic foster mother." I was devastated. My question to the department of health and welfare would be, "When do I become her mother? If you so easily dismiss us as her family, how is the foster child ever supposed to know that we are truly her parents and family?" Today this precious young lady is listed as an endangered run away. Although she has runaway multiple times, I hold the department responsible for her situation. Rather than make her face the natural consequences of lying about your parents (which many teenagers do), the social workers simply placed her in another home. She will be eighteen in August 2016 and will have no legal parents other than the state. I miss her everyday and I know that we are the only family that she has truly bonded with. In particular, her relationship with my husband, whom she calls 'Dad' is the saddest part of this. She has never known a father that would love her unconditionally and not abuse her. When the state took her she not only lost her parents, but also two sisters, a brother and three nephews and a niece who all adored

her. There was no closure for us as a family. Once she was taken we were treated like some type of social untouchables without ever knowing why. We poured our time, money, emotional and mental energies into being her family and in one quick phone call it was all taken away.

Mrs. Cynthia Limary

I have a long extensive history with the Department. I adopted two children from foster care who had been in 17 home by the time we got them, (they were 3 and 5). I also worked for the Department as a child protection case for seven years, and most recently I am a certified Adoption Professional and I do adoption home studies. At times I do home studies for families who are adopting through Health and Welfare. I did a home study a few years ago for an adoption. The children were placed with "fictive kin". The maternal grandfather of the children, lived with a woman who was going to adopt. The grandfather had significant health issues and couldn't adopt the children. This couple, let's call them Mary and George had been married for years and in fact had two grown children. George was married to someone else after his marriage to Mary and had a daughter with the other woman. It was the children of this daughter that were the subject of the adoption. George and Mary were not currently married but were living together. The marriage between these two ended partly because of domestic violence issues and in fact, George and Mary both had a criminal histories with domestic violence as well as child protection cases when their own children were growing up. Now Mary is licensed to provide foster care for these children and George is living in the basement of the home. George is a vet and gets benefits and is contributing to the household income. He just had heart surgery and had recently been diagnosed with cancer, so he was terminal and it was unclear how long he had. When the children came into care they were placed with George and Mary and have been with them for about 18 months. I did the home study and was appalled. Frankly if these people had been a random couple looking to adopt they never would have been approved. They both had criminal backgrounds including domestic violence. They had prior child protection cases. The only source of income for Mary was George and the foster care payments. So essentially no income and she would rely on the subsidy to support the household. It was just not a good situation. I called the Adoption people in Boise and explained my concerns and said that I didn't feel like I could approve this woman for adoption. The adoption workers said they would get back to me. They called a few days later after speaking with the case worker. I was told to approve the adoption. Again I stated that I was not okay with approval, it was my name and my license on the line and I couldn't do it. So we finally agreed on how to word the recommendation, so

that I didn't recommend this woman for adoption. It was basically stating that Mary was fictive kin, the children had been placed with her for two years, and she had an approved foster care home study and license and by her adopting these children they would remain with family. Unbelievable. I did that and the state signed off on my home study and on the adoption. On adoption day in November I was in court with several families to finalize adoptions and Mary was there, and the Department finalized her adoption on that day.

I have another family that I have completed two or three home studies for. They have adopted three girls and in the process through life, had six of their own children. This is an incredible family. They have a big home, a stay at home mom who home schools some of the children. The children have chores, and responsibilities. I have talked extensively with the girls they adopted. The girls are happy, well adjusted and have done very well. The parents, Sarah and Troy have done an incredible job with these girls. The girls are all off meds, and are very successful. The oldest one graduated from High school last spring and is attending college. Their own children are well behaved, nice kids. Some of the children want to go to public school and their parents are supportive of that. The ones in public school are excelling, good grades, good behavior, no issues. Troy and Sara are very young under 40 but are truly amazing parents. They have no criminal records, no history of domestic violence, their references are glowing. They are active respected members of the community. These are people I would leave my own children with. Recently Sarah called me and said that they have been feeling like they are missing someone. They began looking at children in foster care and found a boy in Washington State. I updated their home study (which Health and Welfare signed off on by the way) and they began working with Washington to facilitate the adoption. The child "John" was involved in selecting Troy and Sarah and their family. They have been to Washington to meet with him, and he has been to Idaho a few times. These visits have all gone well and John did an extended visit with the family over Christmas. Every thing was planned to move forward, until Idaho Foster care got involved. Washington state required a home study done by the state. So we thought this would be simple, right. Use my already approved home study, the foster care worker do a home visit and they would be good to go. I got a call after the home visit from Sarah who was sobbing hysterically. She said that the worker came out, and basically said that there was no way they would approve anything, they already had too many children. The worker then went on to state that Troy and Sarah are basically young uneducated parents and they really shouldn't have any more children. It was a horrible experience for the entire family. Now again let me say these people have nine children, and John will make 10. There are not many people with that many children I would recommend for

adoption, but these truly are wonderful people. It's an amazing family with the capacity to love and support all their kids. The children are loved and well cared for. They are being taught values, and manners. They have chores, help care for the animals and do school work. I honestly would leave my own children with them. But some social worker made a value judgement about this family and decided they can't adopt.

So compare the two families. Mary, criminal and child protection history, Sarah and Troy none, Mary-Child protection history, Troy and Sarah-None. Mary's children-in and out of detention as teens and jail as adults, Troy and Sarah's children-no criminal activity one in college. And the family the state approves to adopt is Mary. I wouldn't leave my cat with Mary (and I don't really like my cat most days!) Something is completely wrong here. Also, the state didn't seem to care that John has selected Troy and Sara and family, and formed a relationship with them. Nope they aren't approving the home study or the ICPC because Troy and Sarah have too many kids and are young parents.

In my opinion and having an insiders view, I believe that Health and Welfare have too much power. Every day they make and break families. They meet as a committee and decide where children will go and who they will live with. They basically get to create families. So I think they believe they are equal with the only person who can create families.....God! It's very scary when a small group of people have so much power over so many.

I don't care to remain anonymous, you may use my name any time, and can contact me any time. Please let me know how I can help and if there is something else I can do. I am so glad you are doing this. I have talked to Senator Wood about this and got no where with him. Thanks again, and I want to help anyway I can.

Shannan Mayer, LSW, Ed.S.
1313 G Street
Rupert, ID 83350
208-312-1204

Where do I start.

We went into foster care with the intent to adopt a child. We took our foster care classes and signed up in August 1994. By October 25th, we had our first placement. The social worker told us that they usually want the child to reunite with the birth parent(s), but in this case that just wasn't going to happen. She told us we would be able to adopt this child once parental rights were terminated.

When they asked if we could take this child, we didn't hesitate. This was a young boy, 23 months old. It was my understanding that this child had been in just one foster home. However, I found there was at least one other foster home and maybe another one prior to that. Two to three home before they placed him with us for what we were told "A permanent-adoption placement". We had a couple of visits at the current foster home and then we were told to go ahead and take him home with us.

We were so excited to have this little boy into our family. We even had a baby shower for him with all out family and friends in attendance. We were told that the birth mom's rights would be terminated and they located the person listed as the father on the birth certificate, and he had terminated his rights. Within 4-5 months later, we were told that they weren't sure if we were going to be able to adopt him. They had located, who they thought was the birth father. DNA tests were done and it was found that he was in fact the birth father. Then we were told that even if the father decided not to take him, that his parents could possibly want to adopt him. We were told if they wanted him, they could have him. Months passed. Every day got a little harder, not knowing if he would truly be ours to adopt.

The Department of Health and Welfare set up a meeting with the grandparents and us. They were very nice people. They said they felt it was in this child's best interest to be adopted by us. As you could imagine, we were relieved. They told us that neither birth parent was in a position to take care of him at that time in their life. They also felt since he had already been with us for about a year that it wouldn't be fair to him if he was taken from us.

Our road was cleared for adoption or so we thought. There were times that the social worker told us that she didn't know if the parents were going to terminate their rights. The department could have terminated their rights, but chose not to. Each time we asked about it, we were shunned by the department and especially by the social worker. Eventually the social worker "had it in for us" or at least that's how we felt. She would yell at me and say she never promised we could adopt him. She may not have promised anything, but she definitely told us from day one that we should be able to adopt him and even called it a "Foster-Adopt Placement" on the first phone call.

Month after month went by. Threats of removing him from our home continued. I fought back. It was like a rollercoaster of emotions. Once minute he was ours and the next he wasn't.

I was one of the fortunate ones that actually came out on top. After endless meetings with the department, the removal of the social worker, and me telling them I was going to the state senator and to the media, that it did happen.

Eight days shy of two years, my son was legally adopted.

We continued to do foster care. We had a certain age and stated only one foster child at a time. However, the department seemed to have a way of talking us into a different age and two at a time. We fostered about 20 kids in all.

When our foster children needed something, I would contact Health and Welfare. It was like pulling teeth to get anything for my kids. When I needed someone to sign for a doctor appointment or in some cases a hospital (ER) visit, they seemed very mad that they had to go in and sign. It clearly states foster parents cannot sign any forms, but the social workers would always say – “Go ahead, it’s no big deal.” Yes it is a big deal, it’s against the rules.

When we asked if we could take the kids on vacation, we were told we couldn’t take them out of state. So much for making them feel like they were a part of our family. However, trying to get the department to find a respite home for us so we could go on vacation was very hard. One time we were scheduled to fly out in the morning. We had submitted our respite care request about five months earlier. We finally got the respite care approval the night before we were to leave.

Once there was an instance where I heard a foster child screaming, not the scream from a child throwing a fit, but a child that was screaming in pain. I reported it to the department and I was told it was my issue, the child was fine, and not to worry about it. They never checked into it. That’s when I had them pull my license.

Renee S.

This is our story. We are not the traditional foster family as we were brought in under Code X which is a family member brought in without the traditional background check first, etc.

My story begins July 15, 2014. I received a call from my son saying that they were removing his son from the home for alleged abuse. We were named as Code X foster parents and my grandson was brought to our house that evening. He was upset and scared. He wanted to go home to his daddy but I had to tell them that he was brought to our house and that daddy knows that he is there. At this time, I won’t go into the details of the case but suffice it to say from the beginning I asked them to truly seek the truth because I could not believe that my son would abuse my child. To this day, I still firmly believe that and have seen nothing that changes my mind.

The next day, I had to take my grandson to CARES where I was completely in the dark again. When they finally called my grandson's name, I went to go back with him and the nurse held up her hand and said that they were just taking him to get his weight. He didn't come back for 30 minutes or so and I was told he was all done.

From there, there was confusion about where to take my grandson for daycare and what to do. At this time he was also having visitation with his mother as well. This went on and we just started to develop a routine when my grandson was removed from our home and visitation with his mother was stopped because of suspicious bruises again. It was determined that the marks may have come from daycare so he was removed from there.

I continued to press the social workers to seek the truth and then finally on August 12th with no notice, they removed my grandson from our home. I contacted the primary social worker about why and they couldn't really give me a reason. When pressed long enough they finally agreed that it could have been handled better and notice could have been given to allow for a smoother transition. My grandson became upset every time he had to switch homes when it was unplanned and he wasn't prepared. My husband and I were not allowed visitation with our grandson either. We were not told why and had no clue as to what was going on.

Late in September, we received a letter dated September 23, 2104 that on August 12th my husband and I were named in a referral of child neglect, abuse or abandonment. It was determined that the report was unsubstantiated. We had no idea that we had been investigated or why we were investigated.

I had reported my concerns and frustrations to Richard M. Armstrong's office on several occasions. While I did receive a call back, I was told that they would investigate but as usual, received no answers or information. Just the standard response that "Due to confidentiality laws, I am unable to provide you detailed information about the outcomes of the review without a written, notarized release, signed by both of the child's parents." My son tried to find out the outcome but received no information either.

I did meet one social worker who I really felt had the best interests of the child and our family at heart. She was present during some of the questions I asked of the social workers but because she tried to help us, she was shut out of discussions held inside of the H&W team. I thank her for her work.

I believe that our grandson was removed from our home because we continued to press them to look for the truth. We would ask for what policies and procedures that they followed. We got nothing. They would respond that they were just following judge's orders. I know for a fact that they led the judges and dictated how things would go. According to the judge's guide, the process is also supposed to be one judge for the entire process. This did not happen. In the beginning of this case, there were 3 different judges. The final judge stayed with the case until the end.

You can contact me at [208-919-2977](tel:208-919-2977), if you wish. I do plan to be at the hearing tomorrow as well.

Ruth Taylor

Boise, ID

Victoria Pack <packvict@isu.edu>

I worked as a Para BI, in Idaho schools. My kid I was assigned age 12 was unable to care for themselves. They lived with their adoptive parents who were at an advanced age. They originally got the child as a foster. In another state. The child often came to school dirty and smelling of rotting formula. Often in a broken wheel chair that was not his and several sizes too small. After talk to the parents about it they claimed he was becoming to heavy and too hard for them to manage. They also claimed to be trying to get him a lift and that they did have a live in care provider that comes in for their respite. After this meeting the child was taken to the doctor for rashes and appearing to being in pain during feeding. This lead to a surgery on his feeding port. Which became infected and was being rejected by the child's body. I called and wrote everything out for 1 month before the school finally decided to step in and call child services. They agreed to meet us and see the child. After this meeting, the parents were called and told to fix the rashes and get the child immediate medical care. With the promise of in house visit from Child Services. After the in home visit the parents were approved and even offered to foster a baby, because the foster care system is so overwhelmed. The lady assigned the child's case spoke to me about it when she came to check on the child a week later. After asking her how could they leave the child in that situation when it was clear the child was being neglected and even if the parents had good intentions they could not provide the proper care the child needed. She said, " The foster system in Idaho can't afford to take on a child with special needs. No one will want to take and would cost too much to care for the child through the state."

Thank you for sharing your story. I am so sorry that you had to go through that especially seeing that if we had done what you are doing back in February of 2015, you might not have gone through it as well. Our story is so similar to yours except that we were never Plan B. Our children had been in the foster care system for 18 months when we got a call from our adoption agency looking for an adoptive placement for a group of siblings. Parental rights were expected to be terminated within a few months and we would be officially selected as the adoptive family and be legal guardians of these children within a year. We were told there was a biological father of one of the children who had not been identified but that they were not planning to pursue that. After 9 months of having these children in our lives, parental rights were finally terminated and we were informed that the father had been found and his whole side of family needed to be researched. A relative came forward to adopt them and even though the case workers felt it was not an appropriate placement, they told us they needed to allow them to complete a home study. There was no deadline for when this home study needed to be completed. On top of that, we were told the department had decided they needed to try and reunite the children with other siblings who were in another pre-adopt family. Because of the immense needs of all of these children, they believed chances were slim that they would find a family capable of caring for all of them but that they were "required by law" to pursue that option. In February 2015, after almost a year and a half of bonding with these children, working with multiple therapists and counselors to help them attach to us, and treating them as our own children, the department decided to move them to another pre-adopt home.

Again, similar to your story, it wasn't THAT they moved them but HOW they moved them. There is much more to our story but the summary of it is that they picked up the children from their school and moved them to the other family without informing us. They told us to pack their stuff and bring it to the department. Our case workers acted in an unprofessional manner with us, the foster children and the other professionals involved in these children's lives on so many instances that I cannot even begin to write it here. The worst one being when they pulled our foster child out of class by herself, with no other supporting people around her, to tell her the traumatizing news that she was going to be moving to a new family. They then sent her back to class to continue learning with a hand written note of what the transition schedule would be. That is how fast the decision was made that she didn't even have time to type up a letter. (Again there were NO safety concerns.)

We also escalated the issue to the top of the department and had many meetings with several managers. They repeatedly told us there were no safety concerns in our home. They admitted to us that it was not handled appropriately and that changes had been made to their processes based on our case but that nothing could be done about our children at that point. We were allowed to see the children to say goodbye but have not been able to maintain contact with them. We don't know what they told the children or the new family about us and can only imagine that they feel abandoned by us and unloved which is the furthest thing from the truth. We decided not to fight the system as you are doing because we didn't want the children to have to move again. They had already been through so much and we didn't want them to be uprooted again, even if it was to be returned to us. The children have since been adopted so we feel it is time to speak out. We have stopped our fight to adopt and our only biological daughter will never have a sibling because of this situation. The only siblings she has ever known are out of her life and she is not even able to write them letters. As you can imagine, the emotional trauma this has caused our family has been immense. This affected not only our family but our family friends, classmates and their families, teachers, counselors; all of whose communication was cut off completely. The children were not given an opportunity to say goodbye to any of them and professional services they received while in our home were abruptly ended.

Changes need to be made immediately. The court system needs to have oversight. The judge in our case recommended that the department leave the children in our home and not pursue the other relative placement but they did it anyway. The judge told us she did not have jurisdiction to decide placement decisions but just that she was there to make sure the department did their due diligence in finding permanency for the children. I am a trained counselor who has helped many adults and children who are experiencing trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder but I did not know about the level of dysfunction within the foster care system until we became a foster family. I believe that most of the case workers are good people who get into this job to help children but they are dealing with high stress, huge case loads and difficult situations. So many of them are dealing with secondary trauma and that is passed on to the foster parents and children on their case load. When our soldiers come back from war, they are evaluated by medical and mental health professionals to help them debrief and see if they are able to go back to the fighting. The same thing cannot be said

about our foster care social workers. Most of them have only bachelor's level degrees. They need to be overseen by psychologists and evaluated on a regular basis.

In addition to the changes you are recommending, there needs to be a protocol for informing children of traumatizing information. Transition recommendations from their own classes need to be followed, there needs to be oversight for case workers to make sure they are not too burnt out or having counter-transference issues and there needs to be more urgency in permanence. If changes are not made, it will be a disservice to all involved in the foster care system, but primarily the children.

Jessie Jackson 208-484-4165

Hello my name is Jessie, I am a grandparent who is raising her grandson. My grandson went into the system 9-11-2014 and I've had him for most of his life, he was 6 months old and is now 35 months old.. We are currently in process of going to termination the end of this month. My son didn't do his case plan and the Mom is a drug user and is currently in jail for probation violation. The parents did agree to let my lawyer do an intervention and consented to me being my grandsons guardian, the judge signed off and gave me full and sole legal custody. Health and Welfare won't accept the judges decision. Also at a cost of 7000.00 dollars so far. I used my 401k .

My husband and I have finally been approved to adopt our grandson, but we're not there yet. H&W want me to testify against my son and my grandson's mother in court at the trial. I don't want to do that but I do want to keep my grandson and I don't want him placed with somebody else. I have lived in fear the whole time we have been a foster parent that they will take our grandson away from us. Grandparents have no rights to their grandchildren. We have been to court many times and have never gotten to have our say to the judge, we have not had anyone truly represent our grandson in court, we see new faces every time we go to court ,how can new faces know what is best for my grandson? They are given the file and they just read what someone else reported. Even if the children have representation, what ever H&W recommends is what happens. No checks and balances in the courtroom and if there was H&W doesn't have to agree with them. How can they have so much power? I like being a foster parent, I love children and feel all children deserve a chance to a normal, loving, stable and safe family. My husband is afraid that this is going to take away our chances of getting our grandson for - Adoption. I so hope he is wrong.

In the beginning of October 2014 we got a phone call from my daughter telling us about Christian Alex Brown, he was born June 29, 2014, which he is a cousin to our kids, Christian was removed from his mother and father Christine and Daniel Brown, On August 2, 2014 he was removed from the home and he was in foster care and had been taken out of one and put in another, we were told that he was in and out of the hospital, he got his leg broke and would we become foster parents, so my husband and I did all the necessary steps to become a kin foster family, the licensing agent came into our home and checked everything out, she asked us if we would like to bring in more children, at that time we did not, So on October 9, 2014 Christian came to live with us.

In the beginning there were no visitation with the parents, then I took him to the health and welfare so he could have supervised 2 hour visits, It was a hit and miss with the mother showing up for visits, then one visit the police showed up and arrested them both, the mother Christine's boyfriend bonded her out, however Daniel is still in jail, the mom had moved into a 2 bedroom subsidized apartment with her boyfriend Dean Kester, who was only 17 at the time and was still living with his parents and 2 brothers and a sister and dogs, snakes and mice to feed the snakes in Wilder, she started getting visits out there February 6, 2015, he was picked up from our house at 11 and dropped back off at 2. It started getting harder and harder to see him go. He kicked and screamed not wanting to go. Then we found out she was pregnant again with her 6th child, then she got a monitored ankle bracelet from some of her wrong doings with the law, So a woman hired by the state came to pick Christian up and drive him out to visit, this went on for 3 months while she was on house arrest. Then the state started giving her overnight visits, when he came back from his visits, he was filthy, not bathed, and starving. Christine canceled visits about every other week, then they all got kicked out of their apartment. They moved into approximately a 16ft camp trailer with no running water and a portable electric heater, there is only enough room to get to their bed that is a table or the couch. They have a basinet in there in front of the sink for the new baby Sam, Christian sleeps on another bed, there is no room to play, he is now 19 months old, here he had his own room, lots of toys, lots of room to run, he had his own T V where he liked watching Mickey mouse clubhouse, Sesame street, Sid the science kid. We read books, we taught him everything he knows, We understand the state is for Unification, however how can the state and the social workers say this is a safe secure home?

Christine lost 3 older children, one of which is totally disabled, due to neglect. Daniels parents adopted them, and moved to Oregon, they have tried everything to get Christian to live with them, there's another concern, they live in a single wide trailer with 3 adults and three children, they live off the money they receive for the children, neither on of them are working outside the home, the 4th child died in the hospital at birth. We have taken Christian to all the doctors appointments, which Christine was told about yet she showed no interest in attending any of them. Our biggest concern is for the children, it doesn't seem like a good living conditions, in the last 2 court sessions, the Social worker said the police were called out every week. Then she started getting 48 hour visits.

During the 14 1/2 months that Christian was with us we rarely saw a social worker. We had to constantly call her when we needed something. As for a Guardian ad litem, Christian did not get one until he was

here for 6 months. We saw her twice at the house and then never saw her again. After numerous attempts to contact to contact her we were finally told that we had another one. We saw her one time and never heard from her again.

We don't understand how the State can say that the mother was doing everything that she needed to do. She never got a job, a stable safe home to live in, a secure environment. She lost her drivers license and still drives with the children in the vehicle. All she did was hook up with a teenage boy whos only source of income is McDonalds, and got pregnant for the sixth time in her life.

Why is it that the parents don't have to abide by the laws. Why is it that they don't have to take classes and meet the same criteria as the Foster parents do? Why is it that the State workers turn a blind eye to the necessary steps that parents should take to care for their children? Why is it that they minimize the concerns or Foster Parents? Where is the PRIDE?

We petitioned the Judge to allow us to adopt Christian and he told us there was nothing he could do without petitioning the State.

Our hearts are broken for this young bright boy.

Thank you,

James and Judy Socwell

Judy Cel# 208-371-8008

James Cel# 801-458-8201

Candee <candee64@gmail.com>

As being raised in foster care, living with several different families through out the years, there were good experiences, but then some very bad ones! I learned how to adjust to different aspects of life, as each family has different dynamics, expectation, food, ect..... Then on top of that, you always wonder how long you will be there. You learn not to keep anything as you can not take much with you. The greatest desire is to be loved and accepted, no matter what, but so many of the foster parents do not know exactly what kind of behaviors they will have to deal with..... And instead of helping the child, they choose to move them out..... So as that result, the child learns once again not to trust.....,now years later, I have learned it is OK to have material things, I still have trust issues and relationship issues.

I did have a couple of families that wanted to adopt me....my birth mother and father refused to allow the adoption to happen.

The most important thing you could do for the children placed in foster care..... Is security!!! The only reason for a child to be moved out is abuse of any form! Never because the social worker decides that

there is too much of a connection.... We need these kids to come out of a horrible situation as healthy, physically and mentally healthy adults!

Hi Brian and Val, I hope my story will help the case for reform. My full name is Ginger Kreiter. My phone number is 429-8263. Please keep my name and phone number confidential. The date I received the 4 out of 6 children was May 25, 2012. They were with us for 18 and a half months. They took them away December 15th, 2013. I have seen the state do a lot of bad choices for children in the 8 years we were foster parents. I know what you are going through. I had 4 children that the state told me and the 4 kids that my home was going to be their forever home. I also had done the home study and all the adoption paperwork to make this happen. They took them on December 15th, 2013 and gave them to a unsafe family environment due to this family isn't blood but they had adopted their brother the last time the kids were in foster care. This family they placed my kids with never tried to get them from day one when they came into care this time. The family knew the night these kids came into care and never contacted the state to try and get them. The permanency social worker contacted them July of 2013 and that is when our nightmare started. The department even went against the judges' orders that they could not consider that family for permanency. I had my four for 18 and a half months. I need to add that the 4 foster children I had three of the 4 were removed twice a few years ago when they were in care another time. From the family they have placed them with also that family sent one of the three away twice because they did not want him because they could not keep him under control. The reason the fourth child wasn't removed from them was because she wasn't born yet. Would you please get a hold of me when you have time. I would be happy to help. There is a lot more to my story that I have not shared. Thank you for your time. Ginger Kreiter

My name is Jennifer Zielinski and I have been married to my husband, Kevin for almost 20 years, and we have four children. We reside right outside of Boise, Idaho in a city called Eagle. Chelsea, our third child, was welcomed into our home as a foster child at the age of two and adopted at age three. As a product of neglect and a family history of mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities, Chelsea has multiple diagnoses. My son, Dillon is 19 years old, my daughter Amanda is almost 16, Chelsea is 10, and my youngest, Roxanne, is four. As a Program Coordinator for Idaho's parent training and information center and family to family health information center (IPUL), I work hard to ensure that parents of children with disabilities receive training and information on their rights, responsibilities, and protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). My passion is to help sustain the health and well-being of families who have children and youth with special health care needs through family centered care and create better awareness, supports, interventions and access to a quality mental health system.

Seven years ago Kevin and I were sitting in church listening to a guest speaker who talked about how many children in foster care were in need of foster parents. At that time it seemed to be the perfect idea as we had the space and means to do so. Though the process to become a certified foster parent was easy; I look back and realize that we had no proper training on attachment and/or trauma. The naïve notion that we would bring in a child, shower him/her with love and

security and then live happily ever after was not only a fairy tale, but could not be farther from the reality of a very flawed system. The moment Chelsea was dropped off at our house, by her current foster parent; we knew that there were significant problems. The first year raising Chelsea was full of juggling visits with her biological mother, which caused trauma over and over on a weekly basis, as well as working through significant feral like behaviors related to developmental and social delays. This seemed appropriate and acceptable by the social workers and anyone else we worked with at the Department of Health and Welfare (DHW). Kevin and I worked hard to create a relationship with Chelsea's biological mother; it became clear that she too was dealing with mental health disorder(s) and possibly an intellectual disability.

When we were able to adopt Chelsea a year later, we decided to seek specialists for answers. Her pediatrician, who has known Chelsea from birth and was her biological mom's primary care provider, became our biggest ally. It was very clear to him that Chelsea was dealing with far more than just the environmental aspects of neglect. Chelsea's first diagnosis of Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) came as a huge shock because we really did believe that we could just love her and everything would be fine. Her severe food addiction became our biggest struggle, especially with judgment and accusations. Later, she was diagnosed with PDD/NOS, AD/HD, Anxiety disorder, OCD, intellectual disability, and a developmental disability. These new diagnoses were in addition to her RAD and food addiction, all of which were not identified or supported by the DHW when they were still involved with the foster/adoption process. This created a huge barrier, as Kevin and I were accused of creating these issues with Chelsea by the foster care system, even though it became clear later that mental illness runs in both of her biological parents as well as some of their other family members.

When parental rights were terminated, Chelsea was eligible for adoption. What came as a huge surprise was the difference between the foster care system, where we immediately became the "problem". During this process we were discouraged from getting diagnoses, assessments and evaluations done for Chelsea because the department said that she would be just fine. So many children with trauma and attachment issues have significant struggles with food. We had no idea what we were dealing with, except that Chelsea would gorge, shake, scream, eat until she would vomit, steal, lie, beg strangers for food, anytime she was around food. Because we voiced concern over Chelsea's food addiction, the social worker decided that someone would need to come to our house on a daily basis and watch us eat with Chelsea. It didn't take her long before she realized that this was not a family issue, but in fact due to Chelsea's neglect and abuse. When the home study was conducted, we immediately became a target. Our house was too clean, Chelsea should be able to eat all she wants, and I was targeted as having a food issue myself because of my thin body type, implying that I might be starving her. We immediately found ourselves fighting the system for this child who came to us feral, unloved, unlovable, with little to no social and emotional skills, and severe behaviors. We knew that if we didn't adopt Chelsea, that her life would be in more danger with such a broken system. We were eventually chosen to adopt Chelsea and had no idea that we would soon become a target from child protection services.

The first time someone, the (school psychologist), made a false accusation against us was during her Kindergarten year, everyone wanted to hide the serious stealing, hoarding, and bingeing food issues. Chelsea was very good at telling stories and getting people to give her food or tangible items. I would get calls from other parents asking me if Chelsea is getting fed and informing us that she steals others kids food and begs for food on the playground. That investigation went nowhere, but the social worker denied that Chelsea has reactive attachment disorder and suggested that Chelsea see a nutritionist. We knew that if the nutritionist did not understand mental health, trauma, and attachment that this would trigger all of Chelsea's behaviors. No one realized that food took the place of Chelsea's mother. It brings her love, security, joy, even euphoria.

Chelsea's behaviors were increasingly getting worse as she was getting older. She was mastering the ability to superficially charm people, triangulate to get people to question us as her parents, and to manipulate people to get things from them. Her daily rages would last up to four hours a day, while punching walls, trying to break windows, and throwing things. Our youngest daughter was born into a family where she watched her sister physically attack me on a daily basis and would scream for me to run because Chelsea was coming for me. My oldest kids could no longer bring friends over and our family and friends were struggling to believe this was really happening.

Chelsea was hospitalized for a mental breakdown at St. Alphonsus Behavioral Health at the recommendation of her psychiatrist. They immediately stripped her of her medications and during a counseling session Chelsea told the developmental specialist that I shove hot food in her mouth (something I would never do). He reported that Chelsea was in imminent danger to child protection services. The social worker and sheriff showed up at our house, Chelsea answered the door in her princess dress. The accusations were regarding my neglect to feed Chelsea, which was the opposite of the original claim. The foster care social worker was quoted saying that I have Munchausen Bi-Proxy and that I have made up all of Chelsea's diagnoses. They had ME go to counseling for nine months and then closed the case. They reported me non-compliant because I did not allow them to talk with Chelsea or have her go to a nutritionist. I have been begging for treatment and real comprehensive mental health services. I have yet to find a nutritionist who understands significant mental health issues related to neglect and abuse.

Chelsea's updated diagnoses is reactive attachment disorder (RAD), schizoaffective disorder, ADHD, and Anxiety. All of which the Department of Health and Welfare denied during the foster care and adoption process.

Chelsea's nightmare didn't end there. We have been bullied by the Department since we started the adoption process and tagged as the reason for Chelsea's behaviors. Her rage and the risk of false accusations were tearing our family apart so we had to place Chelsea in a residential care facility. Chelsea's behaviors were proven not to be isolated to just our family and home as the care facility was struggling to support her. About six months into her stay, we got a call from an investigator that Chelsea's care givers have been arrested for sexual abuse. We are now involved in this investigation as Chelsea was one of the victims.

There is so much to our story and the bottom line is that the foster and adoption care system in Idaho, failed Chelsea. They failed our family.

Jennifer Zielinski

Eagle, Idaho

208-830-2963

There are workers in this system that feel that the children are actually the last to be considered. They chose to remain silent because they hope by continuing to they can try and advocate for the children because H&W or Ad Litem do not. I know of some. But even so they often times can't anyways. I hope this system is resolved and you are able to make some type of change and that when H&W begins to provide their "evidence" of the good doings even someone on the other side of the argument, the people who have had the children removed can see even if they are brave enough to state they can't parent and the foster parent should it falls on deaf ears. Or children that shouldn't be given back to parents are. Even though I did get my children returned I was cognizant to see even that side. It must be a screwed up system if this is the same argument for all sides and if there were anyway to help it would be through my attorney who has the complete files on the case years ago showing the flip flopping and absurdity that the Dept works with. Your group is welcomed to the actual files and reports to see how the Dept words and works things if your argument get to a point where that may become helpful. I hope your group's voice is heard and change happens.

To whom it may concern,

I read about your plight on KTVB and so supportive of your efforts. Reform is so needed! I am a former Guardian Ad Litem and adopted my daughter from Foster Care. My daughter was adopted at 12 and she has been diagnosed with Reactive Attachment Disorder. I am a huge advocate of attachment parenting.

Through my years of experience as a GAL, I have seen families reunite and one in which parental rights were terminated. I remain in touch with the family that terminated and it's been 2 years.

I'd like to see a peer support network to be built for birth parents. It's difficult and overwhelming to navigate the system when their children are removed. As a GAL, I have had difficulty contacting case workers; the birth parents usually have a harder time and lack the skills to push.

I'd like to see more with reducing the caseloads and reducing staff turn over. I would like to see a

cultural shift in providing a high quality customer service experience. Being polite goes a long way.

I'd like to see more access for respite care. More education and emphasis on promoting attachment. More planning and investment in meeting the children's educational needs in regards to planning for college. I'd like to see the education voucher, currently only available for children in care for 90 days after their 16th birthday, expanded to all children in care for more than 18 months.

I could go on and on 😊

If you need anything, I'm happy to help.

Thank you,

Loni Wood
Ljwood79@gmail.com
[208-861-2380](tel:208-861-2380)

Cricket Syes

I was a foster child. I will spare you and my cell phone the Kleenex & tears of my up bringing and the final straw that resulted me being a ward of the state.

I was placed October 1980, I was 12 years old. Came from a house of mentally, physical, and sexual abuse. This was my second time in foster care, first time I was in CO, as an infant to toddler. 35+ years later I'm dealing with issues resulting from the choice H&W made for me.

I didn't realize how raw the pain was until I talked yesterday for the first time about my experience. I then started to read all these similar stories. I am so sorry to those that didn't get one home placement or the love of great foster parent. My heart goes out to you. I am one of the few & far between children of IDHW system that was left in one home. I was told end goal was to reunite me with birth mother, but I was never given an end date from what I remember. I was never sent back home, and my foster family wanted to adopt me. It was denied!!! With everything my foster family did to treat me as one of their own, there was always limitations & restrictions on me set by the state. My foster parents hands were tied by does & don'ts set by ID H&W. The simplest thing of spending the night at someones house, or

going on a trip with them had to get approval. After 6 years with my foster family I never really felt like I belong there, was a part of their family. Believe me they tried. I always felt like I was in limbo.... I never knew if I was coming or going, there was always court hearing & meeting. I'm assuming I timed out of the system about the time I walked away from the home. I rebelled and started my long path of life hard knocks. I always had this deep gut feeling of being loved, wanted, belonging.... My own family.

Finally, I understand why I've felt this deep down feeling all these years. It's not just me.

Name withheld

I hope that this stays anonymous, but I want this situation to be heard about and fixed for the kids of the future...The bad news was that I was a drug addict who lost her son to Idaho Foster Care. The day I was in court in regards to my custody of him, I had a case worker for H&W walk up to me before court and tell me that the only way my Mom would be able to keep in contact with the family would be for me to sign over my rights. The lady left the court room before the judge arrived for court. I was hysterical when the judge was walking me through the proceedings. H&W had filled the adoptive parents heads with lies that I was on drugs during my pregnancy of him and that's why he supposedly behaved the way he did. (I started using when my son was 6 months old). They never tried talking to his father. They had no interest in finding him either.

Due to the lies and pulling my son from one family to another, he has been diagnosed with reactive attachment disorder and sociopath behavior. In fact, Channel 7 had his story of his disappearance from a group home in Marsing. He had left there because the family that had adopted him, had left him at the group home and went back to S. Carolina without him. The state convinced the family to bring him to S.C. with them about 6 months after leaving him.

The adoptive parents asked me for advice on helping him with his anger issues about and towards me. When I suggested that he and I meet in a controlled environment, they told me that their advisors said it would only hurt him more.

The good news is that I have been clean and sober since 2002 and I am married (to a Correctional Officer). I turned my life around.

I am scared of what the Foster Care may have created within my son, whom will be 18 years old in April of this year. I am slightly concerned that he is going to come looking for me for the wrong reasons.....
ALL THANKS TO THE IDAHO FOSTER CARE SYSTEM.....

Debbie Wood

I know foster parents want rights but why don't we get the whole Idaho System changed. We need laws to make the Judges of Idaho do their jobs and not let CPS be the sole deciding party in these cases. A social worker for CPS should not be able to decide a case .We need to get Idaho to have open family court. We need to get Idaho to have lawyers to represent the kids instead of this joke of a system they have in place now with Family Advocates/Guardian at litem.

Desirée Hennessey

This happened to us here In Utah..
We passed a bill hb170 in 2010 so foster kids could not be removed after they achieved family relationships unless there was abuse or to return them to their bio family.
I'm so sorry.

Candee Gilbertson Whiting

My heart has been broken again reading these heart wrenching stories of these babes being abused again and again by the health and welfare..... The social workers, the courts, the foster parents all know if a biologic parent is reformable or not!!!! Protect these children and stop the abuse!

Joan Simmons

Idaho's foster care system definitely needs reform.

The goal is finding children homes not ripping them from the only home they know unless there are reasons that the foster family broke law. The kids aren't pawns in a chess game.

I write this with a heavy heart. It is difficult to attempt to summarize my family's experience with the Idaho Foster Care System. We became foster parents three years ago. I worked full time at a Boise psychiatric hospital on the adolescent girl's unit. This was how I came to know about the problem in our society of teenage girls with behavioral and mental health issues having absolutely no where to go. I was astonished to discover that teenage girls were the most difficult to place in foster care. Basically, no one, not even foster families would take them. This became heavy on my heart and after discussing it with my husband we decided to become part of the solution. This was our motivation in becoming foster parents.

Subsequent our first placement of a seventeen year old girl we decided to go to work for a company called PATH. PATH foster parents are the highest level of foster care. It is a full time job that I became very passionate about. I gave up my job at the hospital and became a full time foster parent for up to two girls at a time. Throughout this time we had seven different girls placed with us from anywhere from a few days to permanently.

In July 2014 I met the sixteen year old girl that would change my life. My husband and I have three grown children and four grandchildren and had no intention whatsoever of adopting. This young lady who I will call Leilani, blew into our world with all of her behaviors, emotional turmoil, mental illnesses and the world's most beautiful laughter, and she stole our hearts. I went to every therapy session with her, every doctors appointment, every social worker meeting, every court hearing, (and there were many because she frequently broke the law by running away and stealing) yet through it all I saw how deeply she needed us. Her biological mother was given over five years to get her back and failed on all accounts. I remember her last hearing regarding this and she asked the judge if she could speak to me. She stated in front of everyone how grateful she was to have me as her "Mom".

Leilani had run away six times. Each time she would assure the police that she had a wonderful home life but sometimes she just had to run. We understood and hung onto her. At one point my husband was rather burnt out from all the running away and two social workers sat in our living room and basically begged us to take her back. We did. I remember the social worker saying to me, "You wouldn't give up on your birth child would you?"

cynlimary@gmail.com

We wer submitted and approved as the adoptive family. We even had the judge chosen to do the adoption. Judge "O" in Caldwell who is a magnificent man.

The last 8 months or so we have had some marital issues. I know now that having a teenage girl with such issues can wear on a family. But that was ok, she was still our daughter to us. Regardless, at one point we were considering a separation and spoke openly about this to Leilani and the social worker. We were told the department of Health and Welfare would not take her from us. In November 2015 Leilani ran away again. A few days later I received a call from her social worker that Leilani was to be removed from our home. Apparently there had been a meeting which we were not invited to be a part of, and the decision was made. All that was told to me as a reason was that she had accused me of being a drug addict (I have 18 sobriety) and that my husband had warrants. Both of these accusations are easily enough checked out. However, I was instructed that when she came home I was to call him and he would move her to another home. I still remember the look on her face when she opened her bedroom door and asked, "Am I going to another home?" Instant despair.

Subsequent our foster daughter being removed, I called the social worker and was in tears. I stated, "You took my daughter." He replied rather indignantly, "You are not her mother. She is not your daughter. You are her therapeutic foster mother." I was devastated. My question to the department of health and welfare would be, "When do I become her mother? If you so easily dismiss us as her family, how is the foster child ever supposed to know that we are truly her parents and family?" Today this precious young lady is listed as an endangered run away. Although she has runaway multiple times, I hold the department responsible for her situation. Rather than make her face the natural consequences of lying about your parents (which many teenagers do), the social workers simply placed her in another home. She will be eighteen in August 2016 and will have no legal parents other than the state. I miss her everyday and I know that we are the only family that she has truly bonded with. In particular, her relationship with my husband, whom she calls 'Dad' is the saddest part of this. She has never known a father that would love her unconditionally and not abuse her. When the state took her she not only lost her parents, but also two sisters, a brother and three nephews and a niece who all adored her. There was no closure for us as a family. Once she was taken we were treated like some type of social untouchables without ever knowing why. We poured our time, money, emotional and mental energies into being her family and in one quick phone call it was all taken away.

Mrs. Cynthia Limary

I have a long extensive history with the Department. I adopted two children from foster care who had been in 17 home by the time we got them, (they were 3 and 5). I also worked for the Department as a child protection case for seven years, and most recently I am a certified Adoption Professional and I do adoption home studies. At times I do home studies for families who are adopting through Health and Welfare. I did a home study a few years ago for an adoption. The children were placed with "fictive kin". The maternal grandfather of the children, lived with a woman who was going to adopt. The grandfather had significant health issues and couldn't adopt the children. This couple, lets call them Mary and George had been married for years and in fact had two grown children. George was married to someone else after his marriage to Mary and had a daughter with the other woman. It was the children of this daughter that were the subject of the adoption. George and Mary were not currently married but were living together. The marriage between these two ended partly because of domestic violence issues and in fact, George and Mary both had a criminal histories with domestic violence as well as child protection cases when their own children were growing up. Now Mary is licensed to provide foster care for these children and George is living in the basement of the home. George is a vet and gets benefits and is contributing to the house hold income. He just had heart surgery and had recently been diagnosed with cancer, so he was terminal and it was unclear how long he had. When the children came into care they were placed with George and Mary and have been with them for about 18 months. I did the home study and was appalled. Frankly if these people had been a random couple looking to adopt they never would have been approved. They both had criminal backgrounds including domestic violence. They had prior child protection cases. The only source of income for Mary was George and the foster care payments. So essentially no income and she would rely on the subsidy to support the house hold. It was just not a good situation. I called the Adoption people in Boise and explained my concerns and said that I didn't feel like I could approve this woman for adoption. The adoption workers said they would get back to me. They called a few days later after speaking with the case worker. I was told to approve the adoption. Again I stated that I was not okay with approval, it was my name and my license on the line and I couldn't do it. So we finally agreed on how to word the recommendation, so that I didn't recommend this woman for adoption. It was basically stating that Mary was fictive kin, the children had been placed with her for two years, and she had an approved foster care home study and license and by her adopting these children they would remain with family. Unbelievable. I did that and the state signed off on my home study and on the adoption. On adoption day in November I was in court with several families to finalize adoptions and Mary was there, and the Department finalized her adoption on that day.

I have another family that I have completed two or three home studies for. They have adopted three girls and in the process through life, had six of their own children. This is an incredible family. They have a big home, a stay at home mom who home schools some of the children. The children have chores, and responsibilities. I have talked extensively with the girls they adopted. The girls are happy, well adjusted and have done very well. The parents, Sarah and Troy have done an incredible job with these girls. The girls are all off meds, and are very successful. The oldest one graduated from High school last spring and is attending college. Their own children are well behaved, nice kids. Some of the children want to go to public school and their parents are supportive of that. The ones in public school are excelling, good grades, good behavior, no issues. Troy and Sara are very young under 40 but are truly amazing parents. They have no criminal records, no history of domestic violence, their references are glowing. They are active respected members of the community. These are people I would leave my own children with. Recently Sarah called me and said that they have been feeling like they are missing someone. They began looking at children in foster care and found a boy in Washington State. I updated their home study (which Health and Welfare signed off on by the way) and they began working with Washington to facilitate the adoption. The child "John" was involved in selecting Troy and Sarah and their family. They have been to Washington to meet with him, and he has been to Idaho a few times. These visits have all gone well and John did an extended visit with the family over Christmas. Everything was planned to move forward, until Idaho Foster care got involved. Washington state required a home study done by the state. So we thought this would be simple, right. Use my already approved home study, the foster care worker do a home visit and they would be good to go. I got a call after the home visit from Sarah who was sobbing hysterically. She said that the worker came out, and basically said that there was no way they would approve anything, they already had too many children. The worker then went on to state that Troy and Sarah are basically young uneducated parents and they really shouldn't have any more children. It was a horrible experience for the entire family. Now again let me say these people have nine children, and John will make 10. There are not many people with that many children I would recommend for adoption, but these truly are wonderful people. It's an amazing family with the capacity to love and support all their kids. The children are loved and well cared for. They are being taught values, and manners. They have chores, help care for the animals and do school work. I honestly would leave my own children with them. But some social worker made a value judgement about this family and decided they can't adopt.

So compare the two families. Mary, criminal and child protection history,

Sarah and Troy none, Mary-Child protection history, Troy and Sarah-None. Mary's children-in and out of detention as teens and jail as adults, Troy and Sarah's children-no criminal activity one in college. And the family the state approves to adopt is Mary. I wouldn't leave my cat with Mary (and I don't really like my cat most days!) Something is completely wrong here. Also, the state didn't seem to care that John has selected Troy and Sara and family, and formed a relationship with them. Nope they aren't approving the home study or the ICPC because Troy and Sarah have too many kids and are young parents.

In my opinion and having an insiders view, I believe that Health and Welfare have too much power. Every day they make and break families. They meet as a committee and decide where children will go and who they will live with. They basically get to create families. So I think they believe they are equal with the only person who can create families.....God! It's very scary when a small group of people have so much power over so many.

I don't care to remain anonymous, you may use my name any time, and can contact me any time. Please let me know how I can help and if there is something else I can do. I am so glad you are doing this. I have talked to Senator Wood about this and got no where with him. Thanks again, and I want to help anyway I can.

Shannan Mayer, LSW, Ed.S.
1313 G Street
Rupert, ID 83350
208-312-1204

Where do I start.

We went into foster care with the intent to adopt a child. We took our foster care classes and signed up in August 1994. By October 25th, we had our first placement. The social worker told us that they usually want the child to reunite with the birth parent(s), but in this case that just wasn't going to happen. She told us we would be able to adopt this child once parental rights were terminated.

When they asked if we could take this child, we didn't hesitate. This was a young boy, 23 months old. It was my understanding that this child had been in just one foster home. However, I found there was at least one other foster home and maybe another one prior to that. Two to three home before they placed him with us for what we were told "A permanent-adoption placement". We had a couple of visits at the current foster home and then we were told to go ahead and take him home with us.

We were so excited to have this little boy into our family. We even had a baby shower for him with all out family and friends in attendance. We were told that the birth mom's rights would be terminated and they located the person listed as the father on the birth certificate, and he had terminated his rights. Within 4-5 months later, we were told that they weren't sure if we were going to be able to adopt him. They had located, who they thought was the birth father. DNA tests were done and it was found that he was in fact the birth father. Then we were told that even if the father decided not to take him, that his parents could possibly want to adopt him. We were told if they wanted him, they could have him. Months passed. Every day got a little harder, not knowing if he would truly be ours to adopt.

The Department of Health and Welfare set up a meeting with the grandparents and us. They were very nice people. They said they felt it was in this child's best interest to be adopted by us. As you could imagine, we were relieved. They told us that neither birth parent was in a position to take care of him at that time in their life. They also felt since he had already been with us for about a year that it wouldn't be fair to him if he was taken from us.

Our road was cleared for adoption or so we thought. There were times that the social worker told us that she didn't know if the parents were going to terminate their rights. The department could have terminated their rights, but chose not to. Each time we asked about it, we were shunned by the department and especially by the social worker. Eventually the social worker "had it in for us" or at least that's how we felt. She would yell at me and say she never promised we could adopt him. She may not have promised anything, but she definitely told us from day one that we should be able to adopt him and even called it a "Foster-Adopt Placement" on the first phone call.

Month after month went by. Threats of removing him from our home continued. I fought back. It was like a rollercoaster of emotions. Once minute he was ours and the next he wasn't.

I was one of the fortunate ones that actually came out on top. After endless meetings with the department, the removal of the social worker, and me telling them I was going to the state senator and to the media, that it did happen.

Eight days shy of two years, my son was legally adopted.

We continued to do foster care. We had a certain age and stated only one foster child at a time. However, the department seemed to have a way of talking us into a different age and two at a time. We fostered about 20 kids in all.

When our foster children needed something, I would contact Health and Welfare. It was like pulling teeth to get anything for my kids. When I needed someone to sign for a doctor appointment or in some cases a hospital (ER) visit, they seemed very mad that they had to go in and sign. It clearly states foster parents cannot sign any forms, but the social workers would always say – “Go ahead, it’s no big deal.” Yes it is a big deal, it’s against the rules.

When we asked if we could take the kids on vacation, we were told we couldn’t take them out of state. So much for making them feel like they were a part of our family. However, trying to get the department to find a respite home for us so we could go on vacation was very hard. One time we were scheduled to fly out in the morning. We had submitted our respite care request about five months earlier. We finally got the respite care approval the night before we were to leave.

Once there was an instance where I heard a foster child screaming, not the scream from a child throwing a fit, but a child that was screaming in pain. I reported it to the department and I was told it was my issue, the child was fine, and not to worry about it. They never checked into it. That’s when I had them pull my license.

Renee S.

This is our story. We are not the traditional foster family as we were brought in under Code X which is a family member brought in without the traditional background check first, etc.

My story begins July 15, 2014. I received a call from my son saying that they were removing his son from the home for alleged abuse. We were named as Code X foster parents and my grandson was brought to our house that evening. He was upset and scared. He wanted to go home to his daddy but I had to tell them that he was brought to our house and that daddy knows that he is there. At this time, I won’t go into the details of the case but suffice it to say from the beginning I asked them to truly seek the truth because I could not believe that my son would abuse my child. To this day, I still firmly believe that and have seen nothing that changes my mind.

The next day, I had to take my grandson to CARES where I was completely in the dark again. When they finally called my grandson’s name, I went to go back with him and the nurse held up her hand and said that they were just taking him to get his weight. He didn’t come back for 30 minutes or so and I was told he was all done.

From there, there was confusion about where to take my grandson for daycare and what to do. At this time he was also having visitation with his mother as well. This went on and we just started to develop a routine when my grandson was removed from our home and visitation with his mother was stopped because of suspicious bruises again. It was determined that the marks may have come from daycare so he was removed from there.

I continued to press the social workers to seek the truth and then finally on August 12th with no notice, they removed my grandson from our home. I contacted the primary social worker about why and they

couldn't really give me a reason. When pressed long enough they finally agreed that it could have been handled better and notice could have been given to allow for a smoother transition. My grandson became upset every time he had to switch homes when it was unplanned and he wasn't prepared. My husband and I were not allowed visitation with our grandson either. We were not told why and had no clue as to what was going on.

Late in September, we received a letter dated September 23, 2104 that on August 12th my husband and I were named in a referral of child neglect, abuse or abandonment. It was determined that the report was unsubstantiated. We had no idea that we had been investigated or why we were investigated.

I had reported my concerns and frustrations to Richard M. Armstrong's office on several occasions. While I did receive a call back, I was told that they would investigate but as usual, received no answers or information. Just the standard response that "Due to confidentiality laws, I am unable to provide you detailed information about the outcomes of the review without a written, notarized release, signed by both of the child's parents." My son tried to find out the outcome but received no information either.

I did meet one social worker who I really felt had the best interests of the child and our family at heart. She was present during some of the questions I asked of the social workers but because she tried to help us, she was shut out of discussions held inside of the H&W team. I thank her for her work.

I believe that our grandson was removed from our home because we continued to press them to look for the truth. We would ask for what policies and procedures that they followed. We got nothing. They would respond that they were just following judge's orders. I know for a fact that they led the judges and dictated how things would go. According to the judge's guide, the process is also supposed to be one judge for the entire process. This did not happen. In the beginning of this case, there were 3 different judges. The final judge stayed with the case until the end.

You can contact me at [208-919-2977](tel:208-919-2977), if you wish. I do plan to be at the hearing tomorrow as well.

Ruth Taylor

Boise, ID

Victoria Pack <packvict@isu.edu>

I worked as a Para BI, in Idaho schools. My kid I was assigned age 12 was unable to care for themselves. They lived with their adoptive parents who were at an advanced age. They originally got the child as a foster. In another state. The child often came to school dirty and smelling of rotting formula. Often in a broken wheel chair that was not his and several sizes too small. After talk to the parents about it they claimed he was becoming to heavy and too hard for them to manage. They also claimed to be trying to get him a lift and that they did have a live in care provider that comes in for their respite. After this meeting the child was taken to the doctor for rashes and appearing to being in pain during feeding. This lead to a surgery on his feeding port. Which became infected and was being

rejected by the child's body. I called and wrote everything out for 1 month before the school finally decided to step in and call child services. They agreed to meet us and see the child. After this meeting, the parents were called and told to fix the rashes and get the child immediate medical care. With the promise of in house visit from Child Services. After the in home visit the parents were approved and even offered to foster a baby, because the foster care system is so overwhelmed. The lady assigned the child's case spoke to me about it when she came to check on the child a week later. After asking her how could they leave the child in that situation when it was clear the child was being neglected and even if the parents had good intentions they could not provide the proper care the child needed. She said, " The foster system in Idaho can't afford to take on a child with special needs. No one will want to take and would cost too much to care for the child through the state."

Thank you for sharing your story. I am so sorry that you had to go through that especially seeing that if we had done what you are doing back in February of 2015, you might not have gone through it as well. Our story is so similar to yours except that we were never Plan B. Our children had been in the foster care system for 18 months when we got a call from our adoption agency looking for an adoptive placement for a group of siblings. Parental rights were expected to be terminated within a few months and we would be officially selected as the adoptive family and be legal guardians of these children within a year. We were told there was a biological father of one of the children who had not been identified but that they were not planning to pursue that. After 9 months of having these children in our lives, parental rights were finally terminated and we were informed that the father had been found and his whole side of family needed to be researched. A relative came forward to adopt them and even though the case workers felt it was not an appropriate placement, they told us they needed to allow them to complete a home study. There was no deadline for when this home study needed to be completed. On top of that, we were told the department had decided they needed to try and reunite the children with other siblings who were in another pre-adopt family. Because of the immense needs of all of these children, they believed chances were slim that they would find a family capable of caring for all of them but that they were "required by law" to pursue that option. In February 2015, after almost a year and a half of bonding with these children, working with multiple therapists and counselors to help them attach to us, and treating them as our own children, the department decided to move them to another pre-adopt home.

Again, similar to your story, it wasn't THAT they moved them but HOW they moved them. There is much more to our story but the summary of it is that they picked up the children from their school and moved them to the other family without informing us. They told us to pack their stuff and bring it to the department. Our case workers acted in an unprofessional manner with us, the foster children and the other professionals involved in these children's lives on so many instances that I cannot even begin to write it here. The worst one being when they pulled our foster child out of class by herself, with no other supporting people around her, to tell her the traumatizing news that she was going to be moving to a new family. They then sent her back to class to continue learning with a hand written note of what the transition schedule would be. That is how fast the decision was made that she didn't even have time to type up a letter. (Again there were NO safety concerns.)

We also escalated the issue to the top of the department and had many meetings with several managers. They repeatedly told us there were no safety concerns in our home. They admitted to us that it was not handled appropriately and that changes had been made to their processes based on our case but that nothing could be done about our children at that point. We were allowed to see the children to say goodbye but have not been able to maintain contact with them. We don't know what they told the children or the new family about us and can only imagine that they feel abandoned by us and unloved which is the furthest thing from the truth. We decided not to fight the system as you are doing because we didn't want the children to have to move again. They had already been through so much and we didn't want them to be uprooted again, even if it was to be returned to us. The children have since been adopted so we feel it is time to speak out. We have stopped our fight to adopt and our only biological daughter will never have a sibling because of this situation. The only siblings she has ever known are out of her life and she is not even able to write them letters. As you can imagine, the emotional trauma this has caused our family has been immense. This affected not only our family but our family friends, classmates and their families, teachers, counselors; all of whose communication was cut off completely. The children were not given an opportunity to say goodbye to any of them and professional services they received while in our home were abruptly ended.

Changes need to be made immediately. The court system needs to have oversight. The judge in our case recommended that the department leave the children in our home and not pursue the other relative placement but they did it anyway. The judge told us she did not have jurisdiction to decide placement decisions but just that she was there to make sure the department did their due diligence in finding permanency for the children. I am a trained counselor who has helped many adults and children who are experiencing trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder but I did not know about the level of dysfunction within the foster care system until we became a foster family. I believe that most of the case workers are good people who get into this job to help children but they are dealing with high stress, huge case loads and difficult situations. So many of them are dealing with secondary trauma and that is passed on to the foster parents and children on their case load. When our soldiers come back from war, they are evaluated by medical and mental health professionals to help them debrief and see if they are able to go back to the fighting. The same thing cannot be said about our foster care social workers. Most of them have only bachelor's level degrees. They need to be overseen by psychologists and evaluated on a regular basis.

In addition to the changes you are recommending, there needs to be a protocol for informing children of traumatizing information. Transition recommendations from their own classes need to be followed, there needs to be oversight for case workers to make sure they are not too burnt out or having counter-transference issues and there needs to be more urgency in permanence. If changes are not made, it will be a disservice to all involved in the foster care system, but primarily the children.

Jessie Jackson 208-484-4165

Hello my name is Jessie, I am a grandparent who is raising her grandson. My grandson went into the system 9-11-2014 and I've had him for most of his life, he was 6 months old and is now 35 months old.. We are currently in process of going to termination the end of this month. My son didn't do his case plan and the Mom is a drug user and is currently in jail for probation violation. The parents did agree to let my lawyer do an intervention and consented to me being my grandsons guardian, the judge signed off and gave me full and sole legal custody. Health and Welfare won't accept the judges decision. Also at a cost of 7000.00 dollars so far. I used my 401k .

My husband and I have finally been approved to adopt our grandson, but we're not there yet. H&W want me to testify against my son and my grandson's mother in court at the trial. I don't want to do that but I do want to keep my grandson and I don't want him placed with somebody else. I have lived in fear the whole time we have been a foster parent that they will take our grandson away from us. Grandparents have no rights to their grandchildren. We have been to court many times and have never gotten to have our say to the judge, we have not had anyone truly represent our grandson in court, we see new faces every time we go to court, how can new faces know what is best for my grandson? They are given the file and they just read what someone else reported. Even if the children have representation, whatever H&W recommends is what happens. No checks and balances in the courtroom and if there was H&W doesn't have to agree with them. How can they have so much power? I like being a foster parent, I love children and feel all children deserve a chance to a normal, loving, stable and safe family. My husband is afraid that this is going to take away our chances of getting our grandson for - Adoption. I so hope he is wrong.

In the beginning of October 2014 we got a phone call from my daughter telling us about Christian Alex Brown, he was born June 29, 2014, which he is a cousin to our kids, Christian was removed from his mother and father Christine and Daniel Brown, On August 2, 2014 he was removed from the home and he was in foster care and had been taken out of one and put in another, we were told that he was in and out of the hospital, he got his leg broke and would we become foster parents, so my husband and I did all the necessary steps to become a kin foster family, the licensing agent came into our home and checked everything out, she asked us if we would like to bring in more children, at that time we did not, So on October 9, 2014 Christian came to live with us.

In the beginning there were no visitation with the parents, then I took him to the health and welfare so he could have supervised 2 hour visits, it was a hit and miss with the mother showing up for visits, then one visit the police showed up and arrested them both, the mother Christine's boyfriend bonded her out, however Daniel is still in jail, the mom had moved into a 2 bedroom subsidized apartment with her boyfriend Dean Kester, who was only 17 at the time and was still living with his parents and 2 brothers

and a sister and dogs, snakes and mice to feed the snakes in Wilder, she started getting visits out there February 6, 2015, he was picked up from our house at 11 and dropped back off at 2. It started getting harder and harder to see him go. He kicked and screamed not wanting to go. Then we found out she was pregnant again with her 6th child, then she got a monitored ankle bracelet from some of her wrong doings with the law, So a woman hired by the state came to pick Christian up and drive him out to visit, this went on for 3 months while she was on house arrest. Then the state started giving her overnight visits, when he came back from his visits, he was filthy, not bathed, and starving. Christine canceled visits about every other week, then they all got kicked out of their apartment. They moved into approximately a 16ft camp trailer with no running water and a portable electric heater, there is only enough room to get to their bed that is a table or the couch. They have a basinet in there in front of the sink for the new baby Sam, Christian sleeps on another bed, there is no room to play, he is now 19 months old, here he had his own room, lots of toys, lots of room to run, he had his own T V where he liked watching Mickey mouse clubhouse, Sesame street, Sid the science kid. We read books, we taught him everything he knows, We understand the state is for Unification, however how can the state and the social workers say this is a safe secure home?

Christine lost 3 older children, one of which is totally disabled, due to neglect. Daniels parents adopted them, and moved to Oregon, they have tried everything to get Christian to live with them, there's another concern, they live in a single wide trailer with 3 adults and three children, they live off the money they receive for the children, neither one of them are working outside the home, the 4th child died in the hospital at birth. We have taken Christian to all the doctors appointments, which Christine was told about yet she showed no interest in attending any of them. Our biggest concern is for the children, it doesn't seem like a good living conditions, in the last 2 court sessions, the Social worker said the police were called out every week. Then she started getting 48 hour visits.

During the 14 1/2 months that Christian was with us we rarely saw a social worker. We had to constantly call her when we needed something. As for a Guardian ad litem, Christian did not get one until he was here for 6 months. We saw her twice at the house and then never saw her again. After numerous attempts to contact to contact her we were finally told that we had another one. We saw her one time and never heard from her again.

We don't understand how the State can say that the mother was doing everything that she needed to do. She never got a job, a stable safe home to live in, a secure environment. She lost her drivers license and still drives with the children in the vehicle. All she did was hook up with a teenage boy whos only source of income is McDonalds, and got pregnant for the sixth time in her life.

Why is it that the parents don't have to abide by the laws. Why is it that they don't have to take classes and meet the same criteria as the Foster parents do? Why is it that the State workers turn a blind eye to the necessary steps that parents should take to care for their children? Why is it that they minimize the concerns of Foster Parents? Where is the PRIDE?

We petitioned the Judge to allow us to adopt Christian and he told us there was nothing he could do without petitioning the State.

Our hearts are broken for this young bright boy.

Thank you,

James and Judy Socwell

Judy Cel# 208-371-8008

James Cel# 801-458-8201

Candee <candeew64@gmail.com>

As being raised in foster care, living with several different families through out the years, there were good experiences, but then some very bad ones! I learned how to adjust to different aspects of life, as each family has different dynamics, expectation, food, ect..... Then on top of that, you always wonder how long you will be there. You learn not to keep anything as you can not take much with you. The greatest desire is to be loved and accepted, no matter what, but so many of the foster parents do not know exactly what kind of behaviors they will have to deal with..... And instead of helping the child, they choose to move them out..... So as that result, the child learns once again not to trust.....,now years later, I have learned it is OK to have material things, I still have trust issues and relationship issues.

I did have a couple of families that wanted to adopt me....my birth mother and father refused to allow the adoption to happen.

The most important thing you could do for the children placed in foster care..... Is security!!! The only reason for a child to be moved out is abuse of any form! Never because the social worker decides that there is to much of a connection.... We need these kids to come out of a horrible situation as healthy, physically and mentally healthy adults!

Foster care reform,

I recently had the opportunity to speak with one of you representatives who encouraged me to write my story, to bring to light the damages caused by State Institutions and Foster Care. I am sorry for the extent and nature of this matter. I also know that together as a body in Christ, this will be reformed.

When I was a young child, my mother was involved in a fatal car accident. With nowhere else to turn I was placed into the custody of Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, splitting up my siblings. As the years went by and the houses kept changing, I was left to wonder, why does this keep happening? Doesn't anyone care? With all these questions running through my mind and the continual change in locations, I was left to believe that I must be the reason for all this movement or relocations. While in the custody of IDHW, around age 16 I was placed into a foster home which was to be the location where I would "age out." While in this final home I was involved in a major car accident and suffered a severe brain injury. After months in the hospital and to my surprise, I was returned to the same foster home I was previously placed (the best thing to have happen) To make a very long and hard story a bit more bearable, I have firsthand knowledge and am the result of continual damage of being relocated and not having the security of being kept with a family, to build a family connection, to feel accepted and loved. The results are unbearable still to today, over 20 years later.

If I can be of any more assistance please feel free to contact me. Thank you and God bless.

Jon Nobles
208-919-0454
Nblsin@gmail.com

Hi Brain and Val , I hope my story will help the case for reform . My full Name is [REDACTED] My phone number is [REDACTED] . please keep my name and phone number confidential . The date I received the 4 out of 6 children was May 25 2012, They were with us for 18 and half months . They took them away December 15th 2013. I have seen the state do a lot of bad choices for children in the 8 years we were foster parents | I know what you are going through I had 4 children that the state told me and the 4 kids that my home was going to be there forever home I also we had done the home study and all the adoption paper work to make this happen . They took them on December 15th 2013 and gave them to a unsafe Family environment due to this family isn't blood but they had adopted there brother the last time the kids were in foster care . this family they placed my kids with never tried to get them from day one when they came into care this time . the family knew the night these kids came into care and never contacted the state to try and get them . The permanency social worker contacted them July of 2013 and that is when our nightmare started . the department even went against the judges orders that they could not consider that family for permanency. I had my four for 18 and half months . I need to Add that the 4 foster children I had Three of the 4 where removed Twice a few years ago when they were in care another time From the family they have placed them with also that family sent one of the three away twice because they did not want him because they could not keep him under control . the reason the fourth child wasn't removed from them was because she wasn't born yet . would you please get a hold of me when you have time . I would be happy to help there is a lot more to my story that I have not shared . Thank you for your time Ginger Kreiter

My name is Jennifer Zielinski and I have been married to my husband, Kevin for almost 20 years, and we have four children. We reside right outside of Boise, Idaho in a city called Eagle. Chelsea, our third child, was welcomed into our home as a foster child at the age of two and adopted at age three. As a product of neglect and a family history of mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities, Chelsea has multiple diagnoses. My son, Dillon is 19 years old, my daughter Amanda is almost 16, Chelsea is 10, and my youngest, Roxanne, is four. As a Program Coordinator for Idaho's parent training and information center and family to family health information center (IPUL), I work hard to ensure that parents of children with disabilities receive training and information on their rights, responsibilities, and protections under the individuals with disabilities education act (IDEA). My passion is to help sustain the health and well-being of families who have children and youth with special health care needs through family centered care and create better awareness, supports, interventions and access to a quality mental health system.

Seven years ago Kevin and I were sitting in church listening to a guest speaker who talked about how many children in foster care were in need of foster parents. At that time it seemed to be the perfect idea as we had the space and means to do so. Though the process to become a certified foster parent was easy, I look back and realize that we had no proper training on attachment and/or trauma. The naïve notion that we would bring in a child, shower him/her with love and security and then live happily ever after was not only a fairy tale, but could not be farther from the reality of a very flawed system. The moment Chelsea was dropped off at our house, by her current foster parent; we knew that there were significant problems. The first year raising Chelsea was full of juggling visits with her biological mother, which caused trauma over and over on a weekly basis, as well as working through significant feral like behaviors related to developmental and social delays. This seemed appropriate and acceptable by the social workers and anyone else we worked with at the Department of Health and Welfare (DHW). Kevin and I worked hard to create a relationship with Chelsea's biological mother; it became clear that she too was dealing with mental health disorder(s) and possibly an intellectual disability.

When we were able to adopt Chelsea a year later, we decided to seek specialists for answers. Her pediatrician, who has known Chelsea from birth and was her biological mom's primary care provider, became our biggest ally. It was very clear to him that Chelsea was dealing with far more than just the environmental aspects of neglect. Chelsea's first diagnosis of Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) came as a huge shock because we really did believe that we could just love her and everything would be fine. Her severe food addiction became our biggest struggle, especially with judgment and accusations. Later, she was diagnosed with PDD/NOS, AD/HD, Anxiety disorder, OCD, intellectual disability, and a developmental disability. These new diagnoses were in addition to her RAD and food addiction, all of which were not identified or supported by the DHW when they were still involved with the foster/adoption process. This created a huge barrier, as Kevin and I were accused of creating these issues with Chelsea by the foster care system, even though it became clear later that mental illness runs in both of her biological parents as well as some of their other family members.

When parental rights were terminated, Chelsea was eligible for adoption. What came as a huge surprise was the difference between the foster care system, where we immediately became the "problem". During this process we were discouraged from getting diagnoses, assessments and evaluations done for Chelsea because the department said that she would be just fine. So many children with trauma and attachment issues have significant struggles with food. We had no idea what we were dealing with, except that Chelsea would gorge, shake, scream, eat until she would vomit, steal, lie, beg strangers for food, anytime she was around food. Because we voiced concern over Chelsea's food addiction, the social worker decided that someone would need to come to our house on a daily basis and watch us eat with Chelsea. It didn't take her long before she realized that this was not a family issue, but in fact due to Chelsea's neglect and abuse. When the home study was conducted, we immediately became a target. Our house was too clean, Chelsea should be able to eat all she wants, and I was targeted as having a food issue myself because of my thin body type, implying that I might be starving her. We immediately found ourselves fighting the system for this child who came to us feral, unloved, unlovable, with little to no social and emotional skills, and severe behaviors. We knew that if we didn't adopt Chelsea,

that her life would be in more danger with such a broken system. We were eventually chosen to adopt Chelsea and had no idea that we would soon become a target from child protection services.

The first time someone, the (school psychologist), made a false accusation against us was during her Kindergarten year, everyone wanted to hide the serious stealing, hoarding, and bingeing food issues. Chelsea was very good at telling stories and getting people to give her food or tangible items. I would get calls from other parents asking me if Chelsea is getting fed and informing us that she steals others kids food and begs for food on the playground. That investigation went nowhere, but the social worker denied that Chelsea has reactive attachment disorder and suggested that Chelsea see a nutritionist. We knew that if the nutritionist did not understand mental health, trauma, and attachment that this would trigger all of Chelsea's behaviors. No one realized that food took the place of Chelsea's mother. It brings her love, security, joy, even euphoria.

Chelsea's behaviors were increasingly getting worse as she was getting older. She was mastering the ability to superficially charm people, triangulate to get people to question us as her parents, and to manipulate people to get things from them. Her daily rages would last up to four hours a day, while punching walls, trying to break windows, and throwing things. Our youngest daughter was born into a family where she watched her sister physically attack me on a daily basis and would scream for me to run because Chelsea was coming for me. My oldest kids could no longer bring friends over and our family and friends were struggling to believe this was really happening.

Chelsea was hospitalized for a mental breakdown at St. Alphonsus Behavioral Health at the recommendation of her psychiatrist. They immediately stripped her of her medications and during a counseling session Chelsea told the developmental specialist that I shove hot food in her mouth (something I would never do). He reported that Chelsea was in imminent danger to child protection services. The social worker and sheriff showed up at our house, Chelsea answered the door in her princess dress. The accusations were regarding my neglect to feed Chelsea, which was the opposite of the original claim. The foster care social worker was quoted saying that I have Munchausen Bi-Proxy and that I have made up all of Chelsea's diagnoses. They had ME go to counseling for nine months and then closed the case. They reported me non-compliant because I did not allow them to talk with Chelsea or have her go to a nutritionist. I have been begging for treatment and real comprehensive mental health services. I have yet to find a nutritionist who understands significant mental health issues related to neglect and abuse.

Chelsea's updated diagnoses is reactive attachment disorder (RAD), schizoaffective disorder, ADHD, and Anxiety. All of which the Department of Health and Welfare denied during the foster care and adoption process.

Chelsea's nightmare didn't end there. We have been bullied by the Department since we started the adoption process and tagged as the reason for Chelsea's behaviors. Her rage and the risk of false accusations were tearing our family apart so we had to place Chelsea in a residential care facility. Chelsea's behaviors were proven not to be isolated to just our family and home as the

care facility was struggling to support her. About six months into her stay, we got a call from an investigator that Chelsea's care givers have been arrested for sexual abuse. We are now involved in this investigation as Chelsea was one of the victims.

There is so much to our story and the bottom line is that the foster and adoption care system in Idaho, failed Chelsea. They failed our family.

Jennifer Zielinski
Eagle, Idaho
208-830-2963

There are workers in this system that feel that the children are actually the last to be considered. They chose to remain silent because they hope by continuing to they can try and advocate for the children because H&W or Ad Litem do not. I know of some. But even so they often times can't anyways. I hope this system is resolved and you are able to make some type of change and that when H&W begins to provide their "evidence" of the good doings even someone on the other side of the argument, the people who have had the children removed can see even if they are brave enough to state they can't parent and the foster parent should it falls on deaf ears. Or children that shouldn't be given back to parents are. Even though I did get my children returned I was cognizant to see even that side. It must be a screwed up system if this is the same argument for all sides and if there were anyway to help it would be through my attorney who has the complete files on the case years ago showing the flip flopping and absurdity that the Dept works with. Your group is welcomed to the actual files and reports to see how the Dept words and works things if your argument get to a point where that may become helpful. I hope your group's voice is heard and change happens.

To whom it may concern,

I read about your plight on KTVB and so supportive of your efforts. Reform is so needed! I am a former Guardian Ad Litem and adopted my daughter from Foster Care. My daughter was adopted at 12 and she has been diagnosed with Reactive Attachment Disorder. I am a huge advocate of attachment parenting.

Through my years of experience as a GAL, I have seen families reunite and one in which parental rights were terminated. I remain in touch with the family that terminated and it's been 2 years.

I'd like to see a peer support network to be built for birth parents. It's difficult and overwhelming to navigate the system when their children are removed. As a GAL, I have had difficulty contacting case workers; the birth parents usually have a harder time and lack the skills to push.

I'd like to see more with reducing the caseloads and reducing staff turn over. I would like to see a

cultural shift in providing a high quality customer service experience. Being polite goes a long way.

I'd like to see more access for respite care. More education and emphasis on promoting attachment. More planning and investment in meeting the children's educational needs in regards to planning for college. I'd like to see the education voucher, currently only available for children in care for 90 days after their 16th birthday, expanded to all children in care for more than 18 months.

I could go on and on 😊

If you need anything, I'm happy to help.

Thank you,

Loni Wood

Ljwood79@gmail.com

[208-861-2380](tel:208-861-2380)

FACEBOOK COMMENTS

Foster Care Reform

Kookoo Jacobs These poor kiddos who spend their entire lives with foster parents and then are placed with biological parents or relatives are just traumatized and it has such long reaching impact. It's got to be changed!

Liberty Shepard Signed and donated and shared to over a 100 people on FB. Marissa Ferguson who was my foster sister is now on the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. They just dismissed her disappearing as "another run away" it wasn't until our family who was trying to adopt her kept pursuing and calling outside resources and contacting her previous social worker who actually cared that this has now become a serious issue. Children's lives matter no matter what their behavioral issues. We still consider her part of our family even though they showed up and just took her away without warning. And we will fight until we find her.

Anonymous: A story from a foster parent:

Please keep my name and phone number confidential . The date I received the 4 out of 6 children was XXXX 2012, They were with us for 18 and half months . They took them away XXXX 2013. I have seen the state do a lot of bad choices for children in the 8 years we were foster parents ! I know what you are going through I had 4 children that the state told me and the 4 kids that my home was going to be there forever home ! also we had done the home study and all the adoption paper work to make this happen . They took them on XXXX 2013 and gave them to a unsafe Family environment due to this family isn't blood but they had adopted there brother the last time the kids were In foster care . this family they placed my kids with never tried to get them from day one when they came into care this time . the family knew the night these kids came into care and never contacted the state to try and get them . The permanency social worker contacted them XXXX 2013 and that is when our nightmare started . the department even went against the judges orders that they could not consider that family for permanency. I had

my four for 18 and half months . I need to Add that the 4 foster children I had Three of the 4 where removed Twice a few years ago when they were in care another time From the family they have placed them with also that family sent one of the three away twice because they did not want him because they could not keep him under control . the reason the fourth child wasn't removed from them was because she wasn't born yet . would you please get a hold of me when you have time . I would be happy to help there is a lot more to my story that I have not shared

Another story from a former foster child:

This one was shared by a former foster child:

As being raised in foster care, living with several different families through out the years, there were good experiences, but then some very bad ones! I learned how to adjust to different aspects of life, as each family has different dynamics, expectation, food, ect..... Then on top of that, you always wonder how long you will be there. You learn not to keep anything as you can not take much with you. The greatest desire is to be loved and accepted, no matter what, but so many of the foster parents do not know exactly what kind of behaviors they will have to deal with..... And instead of helping the child, they choose to move them out..... So as that result, the child learns once again not to trust....., now years later, I have learned it is OK to have material things, I still have trust issues and relationship issues.

I did have a couple of families that wanted to adopt me....my birth mother and father refused to allow the adoption to happen.

The most important thing you could do for the children placed in foster care..... Is security!! The only reason for a child to be moved out is abuse of any form! Never because the social worker decides that there is to much of a connection.... We need these kids to come out of a horrible situation as healthy, physically and mentally healthy adults!.

I am so thankful someone is trying to take a stand for foster parents. I was a foster parent for about 9 years for just over 20 kids. However, after experiencing a non-caring attitude from so many case workers and department heads, I wasn't able to continue. I could not stand back and watch them NOT care for my foster children. Anytime the kids needed something, they wouldn't respond. When abuse was suspected and reported to the Dept, I couldn't believe they never did anything about it. Time after time, month after month, child after child, I watched the Dept destroy these kids. It broke my heart! I so wish I could have continued being a foster parent. After a grueling two years, many promises made and broken, and by the grace of God, I was finally able to adopt my first foster placement. He is the joy of my life. I just wonder how many others could have turned out the same way if things would have been different. I could never be a foster parent again and that's sad. We have so much to offer to a child. We need change!

Demetre Gennette I can't bring myself to press "like" but I remember talking about Miss Chelsea years ago with you and Angela, and I just cannot believe the extent of the hell you've gone through.

Stacy McAlpine Manning Jenny THANK YOU for being so brave and telling your story..you are not alone in the hell you have lived. Society does not understand that your story is all too common. You and your husband are amazing. All the best to you

Valerie McCauley So much of that never had to happen. My greatest prayer is that as the system is repaired, care and genuine concern for each child will replace the current apathy that exists from the department.

Stacy McAlpine Manning Jenny THANK YOU for being so brave and telling your story..you are not alone in the hell you have lived. Society does not understand that your story is all too common. You and your husband are amazing. All the best to you.

Becky Novak Thank you for sharing, Jennifer. Prayers for your family as you continue with the current challenges you are facing.

Richard Keyes Well I can confidently say that Idaho health and welfare has retaliated against my wife and I. We have been black flagged from Idaho health and welfare for some years now. Because we fought them on an issue and took it all the way to the governor's office.

This story is not first-hand, but should be shared. Here it is as provided to us:

Hi! First I want to say I am so glad to see this page! My story is this: about 3 years ago my 2 nieces were taken from their biological parents and went into the system. At the time nobody else in our family was able to take custody of them. So they remained at a foster home for a short time before the state began their push for permanent placing and adoption. A couple who knew the foster parents from church had fallen in love with the girls and decided to just attend the permanent placing meeting and ended up leaving being that placement. Shortly after the meeting the girls were moved and have been living with this family since. I want to say it has been over 2 years just since being with their permanent family. This couple is such a great couple and the youngest of the girls barely being 3 when they were taken only recognizes them as mom and dad. They attended all the meetings and had even attended meetings that they were told were for the adoption process. The official court date for adoption was to be end of January. Well just before the court date the state informed them that the girls would be removed from the home. No reason given. So the couple has gotten an attorney and is trying to fight this, but at court they were basically told the judge couldnt do anything.. so they will be going to another court this week with their attorney and also a judge appointed representative for the girls aside from guardian at litem. We are all confused and lost at why the girls were taken and the states plan is to put them back into foster care.. I know this is a long message but I reach out for advice and also for support to stand with your cause! They are hurting kids that already have been through too much! Thank you!

Anna Blackford Unfortunately, they don't have to tell why they were moved. This is just another story about how broken this system is. Praying that there is change and praying for the hearts and minds of these children.

Annette Knebel This is a great thing to be happening,,, its a lie when she said kid's are only removed because of the foster family. Not true they lie and take them.

Renea Killgore Yes they do the system is horrible just horrible

Liberty Shepard. Marissa Ferguson who was my foster sister is now on the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. They just dismissed her disappearing as "another run away" it wasn't until our family who was trying to adopt her kept pursuing and calling outside resources and contacting her previous social worker who actually cared that this has now become a serious issue. Children's lives

matter no matter what their behavioral issues. We still consider her part of our family even though they showed up and just took her away without warning. And we will fight until we find her.

VAL MC CAULEY - I can hardly take it anymore. Val and I have spent the ENTIRE day reading your stories, talking to you on the phone and responding back as best we could to posts and messages. Even now it is past 1:15 AM. The quantity of stories and the amount of pain we have collected today from you is beyond comprehension. CHANGE MUST COME. Pray for our legislators, pray for the policy makers and most of all, pray for the little foster children that are unnecessarily hurting. Then, GET UP AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. Call you legislators, come to the hearing on Friday morning at the Capitol Building. In a civil and educated way, DEMAND change. Our foster kids deserve better than this.

Heather Gee Davis When we planned to move to another state for college for 2 years, the state of Idaho told us they would just place our foster son in another family and give him back when we got back. Children are not furniture or potted plants!

Shannon Vandever The kids needs have to come first not the parents!

Hillarie Hagen This is so great they are looking at reform, but one word of advice... Contact your legislators directly, tell them you are in support and why. Call them, write them, schedule a visit with them. Or even email them! Let them know you personally are in support of this, it will have a much larger impact! Don't know who your legislators are? Google it, it will bring up the website and you can look at a map to find your district and legislators. They WANT to hear from you.

Idaho Foster Care Reform Absolutely right. Nothing can replace personal contact. Thanks Hillarie Hagen

Kookoo Jacobs These poor kiddos who spend their entire lives with foster parents and then are placed with biological parents or relatives are just traumatized and it has such long reaching impact. It's got to be changed!

Richard Keyes Same thing happened to us I cant wait to go to the hearing Friday the 12th 8:00 am this must be stopped. Sounds like this is standard operating procedure them.

Richard Keyes Who in the world ever gave them complete authority they are the judge and jury. They overruled a judge that we were in front of. The judge said keep the kid in our home and we could adopt her so health and welfare moved her out in fact they moved her 5 times and move her out of state away from her sister, family and friends.

Andrea Kartchner I have a question: I like the idea of all changes for foster kids going through court, but do we have the kind of judges that would have common sense and not just view to the department's wishes?

Annaandjohnahrsbrak Ahrsbrak This story brought me to tears, so happy for her but the feeling of lose watching this for I never got that happy ending with my baby girl.

Stacey Hoffman Interesting that she had been a foster parent for 3 years and never had gotten even a single call though there is a foster parents shortage!!!! This is video was done for her adoption party so it was meant to leave many of the experiences out because it was a happy occasion. I hope she will post the rest of the story.

Kathy Wood Idaho is far behind in this area. In California we have open court and the children are represented by real lawyers. Get with this Idaho and get on board !!!!

Debbie Wood I know foster parents want rights but why don't we get the whole Idaho System changed. We need laws to make the Judges of Idaho do their jobs and not let CPS be the sole deciding party in these cases. A social worker for CPS should not be able to decide a case .We need to get Idaho to have open family court. We need to get Idaho to have lawyers to represent the kids instead of this joke of a system they have in place now with Family Advocates/Guardian at litem.

Another story from a former foster child:

Foster care reform,

This one was shared by a former foster child:

As being raised in foster care, living with several different families through out the years, there were good experiences, but then some very bad ones! I learned how to adjust to different aspects of life, as each family has different dynamics, expectation, food, ect..... Then on top of that, you always wonder how long you will be there. You learn not to keep anything as you can not take much with you. The greatest desire is to be loved and accepted, no matter what, but so many of the foster parents do not know exactly what kind of behaviors they will have to deal with..... And instead of helping the child, they choose to move them out..... So as that result, the child learns once again not to trust....., now years later, I have learned it is OK to have material things, I still have trust issues

and relationship issues.

I did have a couple of families that wanted to adopt me....my birth mother and father refused to allow the adoption to happen.

The most important thing you could do for the children placed in foster care..... Is security!!! The only reason for a child to be moved out is abuse of any form! Never because the social worker decides that there is too much of a connection..... We need these kids to come out of a horrible situation as healthy, physically and mentally healthy adults!

Anna Blackford Unfortunately, they don't have to tell why they were moved. This is just another story about how broken this system is. Praying that there is change and praying for the hearts and minds of these children.

Richard Keyes The state does whatever they want to do if you saw one of my other messages they can overrule a judge's ruling they do not have to abide by a judge's ruling that is how much power they have they do whatever the hell they want weather it makes sense or not.

Judy Love My husband and I were fostering a 18 month old, we got him when he was 3 months old with a broken leg, he is a kin to our children, he was returned to his mother January 12, 2016, The social worker has told the court system that she was working her plan, we are totally dumbfounded to this, she is still married, she is living with her boyfriend in a trailer that has no running water, they live on property of some friends. She has sense had another child and has had 3 adopted before our little guy came to us, we gave him a wonderful life, lots of room to run, lots of toys, lots of love, we care deeply and have a real bond with the child and now he is gone, we are devastated, she is now working and the boyfriend has a somewhat job. We saw a guardian ad litem twice in the 15 months we had him, we were the ones that was up all night with him when he got sick, she never showed up to one of his doctor appointments, our whole family love him, we saw him in court, he stunk, like he hadn't been bathed, he dug through my purse and ate some candy like he was starving, we were told they were dealing drugs, and none of that was checked out. The social worker stopped working with us. We would love to see something happen to help us and all the children that are not being treated right, Judy and Jim

Elle Gersema "This case is unique," was the main phrase I received. When in reality each case is. I was repeatedly told this as a child when I questioned the courts and caseworkers about how they were handling my living situation. I hope a lot of children who have aged out speak up about the trauma they have endured while being bounced from home to home. In my case I had a family willing to take us permanently who we had previously lived with for years, but because a busy body relative the system opted to separate us into two separate foster homes. We needed each other.

Lachelle Larson Prieto Judy Love this sounds similar to the Robert Manuel story. H&W dropped the ball plain and simple. Just wondering how many children will have to pay for the mistakes they make. Seems like they make decisions off of emotion, NOT what is actually best for these kids. Hear stories like this and worse all through the system.

Heather N Joseph Soelberg We have been foster parents for approximately 7 years now, with 14 children being part of our family during this time. Being a foster parent is so difficult. Although the heartache is painful, it is outweighed by the reward we receive from loving these children, even if it is for the briefest of moments. BUT, the struggles dealing with The Dept. of Health and Welfare ("H&W") makes being a foster parent almost unbearable! H&W's claim they are doing what is in the child's best interest is far from the truth. It has been our experience they take the road that is the easiest for them, the one that will give them the least amount of resistance, and allow the case worker to have this child removed from their case load.

H&W says children need an opportunity to bond and build healthy relationships. Then it is H&W that breaks the healthy bonds these children and foster parents have fought so hard to build.

The damage foster children suffer is beyond what many of us can imagine. The damage these children continue to be inflicted with when ripped from the arms of yet another "parent" makes no sense. How is this in the best interest of a child?

We have seen the return of the same child to the system more than once. We have seen a birth parent granted multiple chances to be a parent (I'm not saying they don't deserve an opportunity). When does the child's safety truly become a priority? When does the child's guardian ad litem become more of a focal point of the court proceedings? When does the conflict of interest of H&W's appointed attorney not be the same attorney representing the State?

A foster child is not just a number which is compiled into a statistic. A foster child is a human being that needs more than just a case worker who checks off a quarterly visit, a guardian ad litem that rarely spends even a moment getting to know them, a pro bono attorney whose report means nothing to the Court, and whose foster parent's experience/interaction with a birth parent has no merit. Children in Foster Care deserve more! They deserve a chance! Foster Children deserve the love of a parent(s) who knows that blood is thicker than water, but actually has a love stronger than any strand of DNA could ever be.

Melanie Durham Jones The case workers know for a fact that bouncing a child from home to home cause attachment disorders, and yet with the cruel hearts that they have they do it. They cause their own turmoil on these children on top of what their own bio parents do. Idiots at their finest.

Richard Keyes One interesting thing about Idaho health and welfare is they will preach to people they do not take kids out of homes the police take kids out of homes that is BS they do take kids out of homes because they've taken kids out of my perfectly good home for no good reason.

Connie Rudolph they took my grandson from my daughter, he was born with feeding issues and put on feeding tube and then took him straight from the hospital for what they called "failure to thrive" then they put the mom on a child neglect registry which gets her fired from her job she worked at for 3 years and now cant find a job because of it, and because of that they say shes unstable and gave the baby to her ex, so CPS does take kids away from perfectly good parents for NO GOOD REASON. and IF we could afford an attorney she would of won this case but its all about whos got the \$ to fight it and he did and won. THIS WHOLE TITLE IV FUNDING is the whole reason CPS exists. It needs to be overhauled and kids given back to the good parents. if you want more info ill be glad to step up and tell the story, so will my daughter. dont even get me started with the corruption in that department. its been 2 years since ive seen my grandbaby and they left it up to her ex to give her supervised visits till the baby is 18 but its up to him when its convenient for him to let her see him which will prob be never fromn emoticon how sad they have that power.

Michelle Nordin-Mills I was in foster care at several different homes and it is very frightening not knowing when you'll be going to the next home or who will be taking care of you. After awhile I just kinda shut down and didn't get close to anyone or trust them and came off as a bitter, unloving child.

Chelsea Goodwin Idhw on foster and bio fam makes the worst decision with no explanations just excuses They need to be investigated and cases handled correctly and best interests of the children kept in minds at all times

Angela Gross I also have a child with RAD that came out of a terrible situation with his biological mother and whom was placed in foster care for 8 months before cps would release him to his biological father and myself. It's very difficult and these little lives will suffer their entire lives dealing with RAD issues. I feel for you and your family.

Ce Price Thats any state! Ive dealt with that myself! I was hoing to adopt and they told me after having a child for 3 yrs that i was too old to be a permanent placement and my children were too! Because we had older children and

he was a baby! Good enough for foster care but not for permanent! I got an attorney... I think they are better now days but thats just wrong! These kids do bond with families! And if they can bond with any one after what theyve been through then its meant to be! Wish theyd think about humans instead of cases!

Annaandjohnahrnsbrak Ahrnsbrak I feel so much your pain, for this is all to familiar, my baby girl was ripped away to a grandparent she did not know after a year of raising her since birth, it broke my heart , to this day I remember dropping my one ur old little girl of to say good by forever and the look in her face as I had to say goodbye, she didn't understand why her mom and dad and brothers were leaving her, I think of this often she must have felt so

abandoned.

Patricia E. Shuman The department does not care about the welfare of the child as it states on the front page of it's website. Children 1st is what it says. Many friends and relatives I know have been destroyed emotionally and financially trying to fight for the protection of an innocent child. Idaho courts have an advocate that works with Foster Parents, Families, H&W and Judges. These people are usually volunteers and give there recommendations to the courts. In my experience this person is completely ignored if they do not agree with H&W. Many just give up and quit when they see the broken system. A person has to ask themselves? If Foster Families all over the nation are all wrong or is the H&W system broke?

Christy Amos Williamson Completely unacceptable and cruel. Someone in that department is Power hungry and wants to usurp their control. It really makes me sick. Thank you for caring.

Carrie Hull I am very interested in understanding this bill and support foster care reform. As foster parents we have had experience with this personally. Who do I contact, what do I do to help change the system to support children

and focus on their best interest.

Sarah Hines I back this 100% !! Anything i can do to help! I am currently STILL going through the process of becoming a foster parent!

When i applied the 1st time, the woman who did my home inspection made fun of me to my face for trying to become a foster parent as a single mother, even though i had EVERYTHING lined up, including income... It really made me second guess my decision... But now i am re-applying ... And this Bill would change a huge flaw that i have seen in the system!

Spencer N Megan My husband and I started the process to become foster parents in Idaho a few years ago, but after hearing countless horror stories like this we decided not to continue. We had to take into consideration the trauma that could fall on our current children and the future problems that would entall, as well as the trauma a foster child would go through. Being a foster parent is always something I've wanted to do, but it seems like such an emotional risk to our family. I completely support Foster Care reform in Idaho.

Angela Baldwin This is why we stopped being foster parents. The system hurts the children worse than being with broken parents. Awful.

Christina Hatley I know this family who opened their hearts and their home. This truly was an u justice for this family and this baby girl. I agree the system is dysfunctional. It is because of this I have restrained from becoming a foster parent. There's many more families that I believe would open their homes if the system wasn't so broken. Children are removed for a reason and in this case this little girl should have remained with her foster family her family who loved her and protected her.

Kelly Jo Pitcher Andresick Idaho foster care workers were awful in this case! Ignoring the foster mom and lying and placing blame. I foster adopted in WA. While not perfect, I was appalled at the behavior of these workers and what they put this family through.

Julia Torrey This makes my heart ache, the department definitely doesn't always make the best decisions in regards to these children. I truly hope that will change.

Jessie Jackson A lot of foster parents stay silent because they fear of losing their children and don't want to make waves, reform needs to take place and judges should have the power to decide what happens to the the child and their authority should be all. How does health and welfare have so much power? there should be checks and balances in place. Health and welfare make up their own rules as they go along and don't let foster parents know anything. It shouldn't be a crime to ask questions and because you do you lose your foster child. Good parents ask questions and have a hard time being silent because they don't want to see anyone else go through this anguish, sometimes the fosterparent is the only person who truly cares about them. Guardian ad litem sometimes never even meet the child or foster parents and then they all meet in court, all they know is what health and welfare tell them or a report they read. They are just volunteers and have a lot on their plate but why aren't there more paid people for this position? So many flaws in this system.... Nothing is ever perfect but some things are plain as day and still go on as if everything is ok. I am very concerned about this subject.

Richard Keyes Oh and for those of you who don't know t Idaho health and welfare can disregard a judge's order that is part of what happened to us. A judge layed down an order in our favor and they ignored it health and welfare went ahead and did their own thing even though the judge told health and welfare not to. Idaho health and welfare can overrule a judge that is outrageous that is the power that they have.

Candee Gilbertson Whiting As a person that was raised in foster care for 7 years, 15 homes..... Some were very good, others not so much! I will say that any form of foster care I received was better than what I came out of!!! I just wanted to say, that you might want to check out the state of Texas policies and procedures.... My niece was a foster parent there for a few years, sounds as if it so much better than Idaho's program.... As a adult I was going to provide foster care, but then the policy was to return the child/ children back to the blood parents as soon as possible..... In my view this can and has proven to be a disaster!!! Also, we are to bring these kids into our home, love, nurture, provide protection, food, clothing ect. Just as our own child..... And as most foster parents do, then have the child/ children moved out in the drop of a hat, not only is devastating to the child, who then learns to never connect to people, have trust issues and a mariad of other issues, I also does the very same to the foster parents and other siblings! Sorry this is so long.... But I am so excited that you are standing up for the rights of foster kids and parents!

Davina Spafford Stuart i so agree with you Candee. We're in Alaska and have been fostering for a few years.. main goal is _always_ reunification.. even if it should be flat out obvious that is not a good idea.. we have 2 kids right now that we had a bit over a year ago... they have been in and out of care now for about 5 years.. they first came to us in sept of 2014. they were living w. bio mom (had been 6 months since she got them back that time...) in a shelter when she od'd.. we had to go pick them up middle of the night. we had them for 6 months then they were sent back on "trial placement" again... because the only way mom could get into the treatment program she wanted was if she had her kids with her... (so not only mom is living in the treatment center, so are the kids... this is a thing....) we had worked hard with those kids, saw so much improvement.. then, they left, went back, and massive backslides. not only that.. but 6 months later, again the kids were pulled from mom.. they tried placing with great grand parents.. that lasted 2 months.. couldn't handle them.. so back to us.. behavior problems have skyrocketed.. kids are now 6 and 8. the 8 yr old is home today due to a suspension because she has so many issues at school and yesterday she hit another student. We love these kids to pieces, and would have adopted them last year if they'd allowed it.. yet, there are still no plans in the works for tpr. thankfully she will be starting therapy, but that's not til next month, but boy does she need it and we just hope they can get through to her... but, there is just no way at all they should have been allowed to go back to mom's care a year ago when they did.. she was not "ready" and the kids certainly weren't.. they didn't want to leave

Annaandjohnahrnsbrak Ahnrnsbrak There needs to be a time period there is such strong attachment in the first year of a child's life

Anna Blackford Unfortunately, they don't have to tell why they were moved. This is just another story about how broken this system is. Praying that there is change and praying for the hearts and minds of these children.

Richard Keyes The state does whatever they want to do if you saw one of my other messages they can overrule a judge's ruling they do not have to abide by a judge's ruling that is how much power they have they do whatever the hell they want weather it makes sense or not

Kari Wardle Oh my gosh!!! I'm so happy to hear about this! [The Foster Care Reform] I tried contacting my own legislature in regards to her similar issues and was told that it won't matter because in the state of Idaho even if there was a bill before the legislature it wouldn't pass and that was the end of it!!! He wasn't even willing to try. I've been doing foster care for a year and a half and I have some stories!!

Heather Gee Davis When we planned to move to another state for college for 2 years, the state of Idaho told us they would just place our foster son in another family and give him back when we got back. Children are not furniture or potted plants!

Hillarie Hagen This is so great they are looking at reform, but one word of advice... Contact your legislators directly, tell them you are in support and why. Call them, write them, schedule a visit with them. Or even email them! Let them know you personally are in support of this, it will have a much larger impact! Don't know who your legislators are? Google it, it will bring up the website and you can look at a map to find your district and legislators. They WANT to hear from you.

Another amazingly sad and infuriating story:

We met with the Department and they really can't tell us why they took the children from our home and placed them in a home where they are sure to endure a life of abuse and neglect. We loved them and cared for them for two years, ten months, and seven days. We were promised we would be allowed to adopt them, but that never happened. The head of IDHW can't possibly conceive that the case workers made an error as he stated he has been up and down this state and none of his social workers would ignore children on their case loads. My claim was no one has ever talked to these children about how they are, what they want, or even knew them. The Department would not make such a horrific mistake. He feels our experience is not typical of how people feel about the department. He said he knew the workers involved personally and they would never harm children. We were promised so many things and we did everything asked of us. The children ages 3 and 6 knew us as their family. They were told by the caseworker we would be adopting them, but it didn't happen because Supervisors who never met the children decided a distant cousin should adopt the kids. We reached out to the dept heads, the governor otter, his wife, senators, and lawyers. No one could help us the state went against the Judges ruling to not remove the children, but that didn't matter to the dept. the CASA was also in our side, but hi opinion didn't matter either.

We got one visit with the children they begged to come home, I can still feel my little boys sobs on my chest as the case worker told him no. My little girl asked if I would go to the cemetery and put flowers on her grave to remember her. I later ran into her at school she asked me if I was still trying to bring her home, and that her new Mom and the department told her we were the bad guys and she couldn't hug me anymore. Later that week I got a letter from the department that I was not allowed to have any contact. When we see their sad faces at Walmart we have to look away, just because we didn't agree with the department to change their permanency plan. The children are doing poorly in school and are treated poorly by their new family, but the department doesn't care. They have no interest in doing what is best for children.

Case workers told me if they disagree with a supervisor they could lose their jobs. There are no checks and balances, new legislation protecting our most vulnerable is long over due. Not a day goes by, that I don't think of

those children and what that little boy was thinking when he begged me not to give him away. I didn't have a choice.

This one was shared by a former foster child:

As being raised in foster care, living with several different families through out the years, there were good experiences, but then some very bad ones! I learned how to adjust to different aspects of life, as each family has different dynamics, expectation, food, ect.... Then on top of that, you always wonder how long you will be there. You learn not to keep anything as you can not take much with you. The greatest desire is to be loved and accepted, no matter what, but so many of the foster parents do not know exactly what kind of behaviors they will have to deal with..... And instead of helping the child, they choose to move them out..... So as that result, the child learns once again not to trust.....,now years later, I have learned it is OK to have material things, I still have trust issues and relationship issues.

I did have a couple of families that wanted to adopt me....my birth mother and father refused to allow the adoption to happen.

The most important thing you could do for the children placed in foster care..... Is security!!! The only reason for a child to be moved out is abuse of any form! Never because the social worker decides that there is too much of a connection.... We need these kids to come out of a horrible situation as healthy, physically and mentally healthy adults!.

I am so thankful someone is trying to take a stand for foster parents. I was a foster parent for about 9 years for just over 20 kids. However, after experiencing a non-caring attitude from so many case workers and department heads, I wasn't able to continue. I could not stand back and watch them NOT care for my foster children. Anytime the kids needed something, they wouldn't respond. When abuse was suspected and reported to the Dept, I couldn't believe they never did anything about it. Time after time, month after month, child after child, I watched the Dept destroy these kids. It broke my heart! I so wish I could have continued being a foster parent. After a grueling two years, many promises made and broken, and by the grace of God, I was finally able to adopt my first foster placement. He is the joy of my life. I just wonder how many others could have turned out the same way if things would have been different. I could never be a foster parent again and that's sad. We have so much to offer to a child. We need change!

CHANGE.ORG COMMENTS

I have seen the system take a child away from loving, devoted foster parents in the only home he has ever known and given to another family because he was bonding with the first family. It has broken all of their hearts and will cause permanent damage to the child. Something is very wrong with a system that would do that to a child! It was definitely not for the benefit of the child!

KAREN WRIGHT, EAGLE, ID7 minutes ago

I have personally felt and observed the damaging effects on foster children and well meaning adults trying to help foster children under the current rules and regulations. These need to be reformed so that they are helpful to those who can help and not causing serious long term psychological problems with foster children.

Thank you for inviting comments.

Ronald Clark, Eagle, ID33 minutes ago

I have seen many families affected by their foster children being taken away and placed back in detrimental situations. It doesn't seem to me that the children's best interest is considered.

Marisa Lamm, Eagle, ID35 minutes ago

I'm signing because I watched my parents struggling for many years when fostering children and saw the hardship it caused on the children as well as the fostering parents!

Stephanie Veach, Nampa, ID5 minutes ago

I've adopted and experienced that world. I've watched some things happen in families with their foster kids where it is not for the good of the child. Let's please reform and do what's best for the child and nothing else!

Justin Nielsen, Eagle, ID58 minutes ago

Reform and judicial oversight needed!!!

Kelly Hunemiller, Boise, ID59 minutes ago

My friend's sister has been abducted and needs to be found.

Ashleigh Easley, Reno, NV hour ago

We have need of some foster care change

Tim Fortin, Kuna, ID hour ago

There needs to be a best interest standard for children regarding placement. Foster parents need to have more input into the court system.

Valerie Bish, Boise, ID hour ago

I am signing because I personally know that the current laws do not protect the foster children of Idaho.

Bonnie K Clark, Eagle, ID hour ago

I have been a foster parent for 5 years and I have seen this happen over and over again. The children are caught in the middle and there needs to be a voice for them.

Kea Loveland, Nampa, ID hour ago

I support reform. Children first

Jennifer Mikel, Middleton, ID hour ago

I believe early childhood development is a crucial part of raising healthy adults who then contribute to a healthier society. And I believe in checks and balances, especially when it comes to children and their welfare.

Mila Gaulrapp, Sandpoint, ID hours ago

I am an advocate for children.

Don Brinton, Eagle, ID hours ago

I've seen many friends and family who are foster parents have their hearts broken when children who have been with them for a long time and offered to them for adoption removed and sent to live with relatives that were deemed not appropriate in the middle of adoption for no real reason other than they can. The pain this causes have stopped many from providing a stable and loving home for children who badly need it.

Leslie Hatt, Eagle, ID hours ago

It's so cruel to take a child from a loving foster home because they are forming a strong attachment with the foster parents, which is what has been happening in Idaho lately!!

Deanna Terry, Grain Valley, MO hours ago

As a foster parent, adoptive parent and educator, I have seen such disregard for the emotional needs of children...straight from those in charge. They have title, but no heart.
Teola Sheldon, Nampa, ID hours ago

The system needs to change!!!
Jenny Needles, Meridian, ID hours ago

Reform is essential for the Idaho foster program
Carolyn Kiesel, Boise, ID hours ago

I plan to foster/adopt in Idaho in the future. I've seen the absurd situations that have happened to friends in the foster world, and so I too desperately want for these kids to have as much consistency, attachment, and advocacy in their lives as possible.
Rebecca Whiting, Nampa, ID hours ago

Regulatory departments and agencies must be accountable to the courts at the very least.
Paul Johnson, Eagle, ID hours ago

I am in support of Idaho Foster Care reform to protect ALL children to a stable, nurturing home and time frame decisions be made in a timely manner in order to add to the security and a loving home environment that is a right to all children.
Deb Winward, Star, ID hours ago

I agree, some of the laws should be re written
Laura Denney, Boise, ID hours ago

I was a guardian ad Litem for Ada county and I've seen first hand one of the horror stories!
Terri Reno, Kuna, ID hours ago

I'm signing because I'm pro-life and that means taking care of all children
Devanie Christensen, Rexburg, ID hours ago

Have seen first hand the trauma that the current system inflicts upon children and foster families.
Rhonda Quinn, Middleton, ID hours ago

Foster children need better protection.
katie smith, Garden City, ID hours ago

I am signing because we need to look out for the best interests of children, not adults!
Chris Warren, Sandpoint, ID hours ago

Every child life should be up help to the highest priority
Lisa Holligan, Abernathy, TX3 hours ago

Foster children need to feel secure. Their lives are difficult enough!
Cheryl Dias, Wendell, ID3 hours ago

I love children and believe that bonding is critical to the children. They deserve to feel loved and cared for.

Rolane Gibbons, Nampa, ID3 hours ago

Three main reasons I am signing - One to support my friend who has had to deal with the devastation of this system because she cared enough to do what she could to be a great foster parent. The second reason is because although I was not in foster care prior to living with my dad I should have been. No one did anything until I decided to take matters into my own hands and save myself by contacting my other parent (who had no idea due to divorce and distance of residence, how bad it was). Up until then I was afraid to "tell". Even after that it took my stable parent countless appearances in court giving my unstable parent the opportunity to try to keep me, luckily the unstable parent never showed up. My step parent was a murderer, abuser, etc. We lived in a trailer in the woods with no electricity, no hot water, etc. I never understood why anyone would give my unstable parent a chance, had I been sent back, I would have ran away, my life would have been completely different than it is today. My husband and I also applied to be foster parents for my husbands step children (his step children from a prior relationship). We had them every other weekend, and sometimes for a week at a time as it was, and whenever mom called and couldn't handle it anymore. Their mom had not been taking care of them and we already had bought them their own clothes, scooters, dressers, etc at our house so when they came they had everything they needed. Although kids were taken from mom, her preference was a leader in her church. Because he was told by mom that she knew of no one else who would take them, he applied immediately and he got chosen right away. Their biological dad wanted us to have them while he was trying to get custody after the kids being removed and the kids wanted to be with us, they called my husband "dad" since they were toddlers. It made no sense at all that mom had any say and that they would place the children with someone they didn't know like they knew us and who they didn't have bonds with like they did us. Terrible experience, definitely not focused on what was best for the kids. Those kids are now adults and have thanked us for doing what we did to get them to a better place with their dad, we were one of the calls that turned mom in for neglect and abuse. It took multiple calls from different people who ed their situation and visits with many chances to change before they removed the kids from that situation. Very sad....

Wendy Mason, Garden City, ID3 hours ago

I know first hand the damage the dept can do to a child who has formed bonds and has anticipated permanency with a foster parent.. And then the dept expecting a mother to choose between a bio and a foster child who she both loves and supports completely..

lisa andersen, Post Falls, ID3 hours ago

I'm a foster parent who has had terrible experiences.

Karl Wardle, Heyburn, ID3 hours ago

As a previous foster parent and someone whose family has taken in a lot of children I have seen first hand how the system has failed dozens of times. My mother was in the process of adopting Marissa Ferguson when they showed up and took her. Now she is missing and they didn't even notify her, she found out online. She is like my sister and Marissa is like her daughter. And we're the only people who have adamantly been searching for her. The system just dismisses these kids when they behave negatively, they dismissed her as just another run away but my mom and I fought hard and now she is on the national center for missing and exploited children. Just because she isn't our blood doesn't mean she's not family!!!

Liberty Shepard, Reno, NV3 hours ago

When something is broke we need to fix it.

John Mark, Meridian, ID3 hours ago

Our foster system is broken if children are taken away from loving, caring families because "they have bonded too much" or simply because it hits the 8 month mark. Children need love AND stability!

Cynthia Peterson, Caldwell, ID3 hours ago

I am signing because we have kids adopted via the foster system, I know their stories. We have also done some foster care. I have friends that have done foster / adopt as well and some of their stories are much much worse than mine.

Sharon Butterfield, Mountain Home, ID3 hours ago

I have had a first hand look at how broken the foster care system is. It seems to me that the needs of the biological parents are put first. ...and what is best for children a distant second. Change is desperately needed.

Kimberly Barton, Nampa, ID3 hours ago

I'm signing because I would like some review on whether the policies in place focus on the best for each child AND whether those policies are being followed.

Jennifer Butler, Eagle, ID3 hours ago

Children and the compassionate people trying to help them deserve better.

Elizabeth Lane, Eagle, ID4 hours ago

I'm signing in support of my friend Jamie who had her family ripped apart. It needs to stop. These children need to be protected and allowed to live with families that love them.

Marci Pokorney, Meridian, ID4 hours ago

I care about all children, and I have felt the foster system needed reform for a long time. We need to give children the best chance to be successful

Jenny Guthrie, Logan, UT4 hours ago

I believe that if the bonds of attachment are solid with the foster home and the child feels comfortable and is safe and all of their needs are met . That child shouldn't be moved from that home

Virginia Lubovich, Meridian, ID4 hours ago

I don't want the children to suffer by being pulled out of loving homes. They're biological families have caused these children enough suffering.

Alison Hucks, Meridian, ID4 hours ago

Children should have a stable, loving home and they shouldn't have to wait until their parents get their act together to have it.

Tiffaney Harris, Caldwell, ID4 hours ago

Foster kids need people to look out for their best interests. They are not just numbers in a system, but people whose lives are impacted by these decisions forever. Please sign this petition for essential reforms.

Jennifer Black, Eagle, ID4 hours ago

I witnessed the effects of a child pulled in and out of a good home. Tragic and Sad don't begin to describe the impact to the child and the family.

Michael Hunter, Eagle, ID4 hours ago

I care about the future of the children of Idaho, and want them to have a loving family.

Dave Thames, Meridian, ID4 hours ago

I'm signing because treatment is not working in favor of the kids in this system. It seems to favor the biological family/parents. I think what's best for the child is most important but the state is failing miserably to be their advocate and ensure their well being. I also think that in order to keep good foster homes, their needs and desires need to be addressed. They are the people who know these kids the best. They have the hands on experience with them. The foster care program was set up to protect these volatile children. Now let's actually do it!
Trina Browning, Caldwell, ID4 hours ago

I care about protecting the welfare of children in Idaho!
Liv Christianson, Eagle, ID4 hours ago

I care about the children of Idaho having a good life.
Dave Thames, Meridian, ID4 hours ago

I say YES to Idaho Foster Care Reform.. The children need a voice, stability, and not moved around from place to place....
Kim Felix, Caldwell, ID4 hours ago

I was a foster parent for about 9 years and had multiple issues with the Department of Health and Welfare. I asked them to pull my license. I told them since they don't care what happens to these children, I cannot be a part of that. I had a suspected abuse of a child, and I was told that the child is fine and that it was my issue and I just needed to let it go. Change is needed immediately. Someone needs to speak up for these children. Foster parents should be considered one of the department's most valuable resources for these kids, but all they do is push us away. They treat us like we don't know anything about the children, even though we are the ones who care for them 4 hours a day. Foster parents should have a voice when it comes to all the unnecessary moves, disruptions, and lack of resources that are provided for each child. I am delighted to sign this petition.
J Renee Swanson, Meridian, ID4 hours ago

My very good friend is trying to adopt
melissa porter, Vernal, UT4 hours ago

My husband and I were foster parents for seven years and agree that the parents' rights seem to come before the foster children. This needs to change!
Wendi Ballard, Rexburg, ID4 hours ago

I have friends who provide foster care that need this petition supported!!!
Becky Burnham, Nampa, ID4 hours ago

Administrative agencies both federal and state do NOT know better than the citizens. All administrative agencies must be reigned in. The Constitution of the United States gives power to the citizens, not the government. Administrative agencies have through the passing of many laws obtained the power that the Constitution gives to the citizens. This is invalid and unconstitutional activity and must be stopped.
Stace Lee, Eagle, ID5 hours ago

i was in foster care for 5 years
amanda clampitt, Boise, ID5 hours ago

I have been affected by this as a teenager and know that the children's best interest is truly not the top priority, when kids are left in horrible environments because biological relations speak louder than what is in the best interest of the child.

Kara Steik, Eagle, ID5 hours ago

I am an advocate for children in the foster care system. There is a need for better education throughout the foster care system to maintain the best interest of these children to develop into healthy and adapted adults.

Elizabeth Loyd, Boise, ID5 hours ago

I did daycare for a wonderful foster mom, and watched as the state, first made promises and then changes the rules. The kids were doing so well with her and made so much progress. Everyone they went to visit their real family they slid backwards. Sadly after the parents were declared unfit, they found distant relatives the kids didn't know and who had criminal records to take in the kids. Blood isn't always in the best interest of the child.

Kim Day, Kuna, ID5 hours ago

I am a foster parent

Sandra Brostrom, Twin Falls, ID5 hours ago

The Dept is totally and completely out of control. They have no oversight and if you disagree with them or try to do things that are best for the children they will retaliate.

They are proof the power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

George Satter, Boise, ID5 hours ago

I was a foster parent for years. The system is broken. It needs to be adjusted so that the rights of the children are considered.

Heather Mark, Eagle, ID5 hours ago

My family and I were some of the people that were affected by these laws first hand. It was awful!

Gwendelyn Vergobbi, Kingston, ID5 hours ago

Health and Welfare is violating its own rules. No agency should be able to operate without question or oversight. This agency should be putting children first and not getting caught up in its own bureaucracy. When that occurs, the first thing to disappear is humanity, along with humanity and compassion.

Marlisa Keyes, Sandpoint, ID5 hours ago

My experience as a foster parent was a horrible one and I believe that change is not only needed but necessary.

Ruth Taylor, Boise, ID5 hours ago

We moved away from Idaho because of the corrupt system. I'm so excited to finally see some substantial outrage at the ineptness of the system.

Laurie Moyer, Yelm, WA5 hours ago

I was a foster child and the number one thing these kids need is security and trust

Lisa Lint, Nampa, ID5 hours ago

I really want to foster, but based on the horror stories I've read about the system in Idaho I've been hesitant to get involved. I want to know that someone is looking out for these kids and their best interest. These kids didn't choose this life, and they deserve not only some stability and security, but a chance to actually bond with their foster families. A chance at a LIFE. There should be no reason to remove them unless abuse is suspected, or there is permanent placement available.

Shannon White, Kuna, ID5 hours ago

I'm signing because I was born in Pocatello, Idaho where the presence of dysfunctional families was prevalent. The importance of foster care children finding safe, loving homes cannot be overstated. The bonds that some of these children have with their foster families should not be broken either.

Nakita Santiago, Austin, TX5 hours ago

I was born and raised in Idaho, have seen the effects of poorly-managed foster care system, and would like to see children given better, more considered (and compassionate) treatment.

Jana Light, Honolulu, HI5 hours ago

I think changes need to be made that put the focus more on the needs of the child not the department or others involved.

Scott Stewart, Meridian, ID5 hours ago

I was a foster child and didn't stay long at the foster homes. It was traumatizing and I just shut down after awhile because I didn't know when I'd actually get a home to live in. I to this day get separation anxiety.

Michelle Nordin, Boise, ID5 hours ago

I hope to become a foster parent in the future and I want the laws to protect the children's rights to be given the best care possible!

Rachel Parrish, Boise, ID5 hours ago

Because we fostered and adopted our son and we know first hand the effects he has because of decisions that were made while he was in care.

Jenn Skeesick, Wapato, WA5 hours ago

My Wife and I were taken advantage of and lied to by Idaho's foster program after a child was taken from us two years after we received him from birth and told we would adopt him no problems.

Adam Mark, Eagle, ID5 hours ago

We were foster parents for over 10 years and adopted 6 children. Idaho needs to change and make the kids come first not the parents!

Shannon Vandever, Rathdrum, ID5 hours ago

Idaho's children are worth it and if we want great foster parents we need a better system.

Sara Hansen, Star, ID6 hours ago

My husband and I as Foster parents had the same thing happen to us. Two sisters removed because we we're bonding. Getting too attached. We never had a voice and neither did the girls. It should change!

Terri Mudd, Nampa, ID6 hours ago

They have too much power!! It's like they are above the law. They don't care about your opinions. And they don't care about certain issues about the children you are living with. They think they know it all. And I don't believe their idea that it's what's best for the child. No way.

Jane Keyes, Star, ID6 hours ago

There needs to be a change!!!

Raeanne Blackner, Nampa, ID6 hours ago

I was a foster child and went through hell 5 foster homes 3 group homes from age 4-8

anngie munoz, Caldwell, ID6 hours ago

My family and foster children experienced gross abuse perpetrated by IDHW foster care workers and their superiors.

Christie Stephenson, Lehi, UT6 hours ago

stability for foster children

Sherri Randall, Eagle, ID6 hours ago

In support of a loved one who had their foster baby taken away and given to someone else to foster without warning. They had him since he was born. He was 4 months. SAD!

Stephanie Higgins, Nampa, ID6 hours ago

Bonding and attachment are critical to a child's development and mental health. To move them around is inexcusable without very good reason.

Melanie Prescott, Brainerd, MN6 hours ago

We have personally seen this impact of this in our very good friend's lives.

Marilyn Smith, Eagle, ID6 hours ago

Children deserve happiness especially when their life is not that great to start with. Why remove them if things are going amazingly?!

Jennifer White, Twin Falls, ID6 hours ago

This system is broken and has lost their mission to help children

melody watts, Meridian, ID6 hours ago

I have been witness to capricious decisions by the Department that adversely impact the children for whom they are chartered to care. I have witnessed the same Department decisions sustained by legal maneuvers to avoid court scrutiny of their decisions. I have witnessed caring foster parents with no rights to participate in Department decisions that adversely impact children they have nurtured.

Gary Gwin, Eagle, ID6 hours ago

I'm signing because things need to change. My cousin and his wife fostered many children and tried to adopt. They genuinely love the children they have invited into their home and hearts! The child they tried to adopt was moved out of their home, but she will never leave their hearts. Why was this family torn apart? Why was all this pain inflicted? Things need to change-now!

Tamara Tanner, Cumming, GA6 hours ago

I know a few families and children in the treasure valley that have had huge struggles with the system the way it is now.

Deborah Hillesland, Nampa, ID6 hours ago

My foster son was one of the many effected by poor decision making in his best interest, which in turn cause undue stress and trauma.

Andrew Sertr, Boise, ID6 hours ago

This needs to happen!!

Victoria Pack, Mountain Home, ID6 hours ago

I support the changes that need to reform the foster care program! I think it is in the children's best interests! I am a foster parent and believe these changes need to be made to keep the Department of Health and Welfare accountable and help the children have a healthier and happier experience while in their care.

MeDynn Call, Boise, ID6 hours ago

I hope something changes.... I am currently fighting for guardianship of a lil 4m old girl that the system won't help or even look into what I have proof of. The Judge didn't grant my emergency temp guardianship cause I had the baby for the whole month and as soon as the parents found out they called the cops wanted the lil girl back. The officer made me give her to mom cause my court case is all pending. Wouldn't even look at any evidence of the neglect or other facts. Told me fallow thru with trying to get her, to call cps if I get new info and that he made a referral to cps yet see nothing done. I've filed another affidavit for emergency guardianship after talking to the judge's clerk she told me the judge won't review it till the child has a guardian ad litem. I then tell her that the child was no longer with us, and still nothing. Going on wks now and don't have intake/interview till the 3rd for her guardian ad litem. Been so sick to my stomach and worried about the baby.

So much info and stuff that I would be typing for hours.

amanda hopper, Boise, ID6 hours ago

The best interest of the children is not being served.

Jill Eells, Nampa, ID6 hours ago

Our current foster care program needs reform. I would also like to see a citizens review committee formed with regards to the adoption process of children in the foster care system.

kim cowley, Eagle, ID6 hours ago

The children deserve better!

Jason Saadi, Eagle, ID6 hours ago

It is our duty to support the best interest of the children in foster care! They need us to be their voice and we need to speak on for the BEST INTERESTS to be at the forefront of every decision that is made for them!

JInJue Serre, Boise, ID6 hours ago

Kids need to have their best interest served.

Melanie Lewis, Nampa, ID6 hours ago

We need Foster Care Reform, these children are not being taken care of by the Idaho Department of Welfare, Their best interest are not a priority in most cases that they are in charge of the foster parents voice is not heard nor are the voices of the children THIS NEEDS TO CHANGE

Sandra Neff, Cascade, ID6 hours ago

I have witnessed the devastating affect of Idaho's poor policy on foster children and those trying to provide loving secure environments for these children.

Hoyt Hagens, Boise, ID6 hours ago

I agree the foster care system needs reform for the sake of our kids and families

Michelle Alden, Boise, ID6 hours ago

The pendulum of power has swung too far in favor of the Department of Welfare. There needs to be a check and a balance in making decision for the future of foster care children

James McCauley, Eagle, ID6 hours ago

I am very concerned for the welfare of children in the current foster system.

Roberta Honn, Eagle, ID6 hours ago

As a licensed foster parent in Idaho I saw first hand the negative outcomes the current system has on children in care. My story although far worse than most is not uncommon, Children shuffled from home to home. After numerous placements the children detach and the effects are horrific. Kallen was 5 when he came to live with me. 36 placements. After just 5 weeks in my home his honeymoon period ended and he burned two buildings to the ground causing nearly a million dollars in damages. The state knew of his potential for violence. When he would become aggressive in a home instead of allowing Foster parents to appropriately discipline him the state simply moved him. They created a monster. I now live each day in fear of him and others that have gotten lost in the system of hurt. Kallen was in the system from until 5 and never adopted. Shuffled from home to home. I use his name because he was tried and sentenced as an adult because of the extreme nature of his crime. When his trial occurred the state came to support him, but did not offer me any support. The instead sent me a check for \$, to cover damages. The slap in the face that no one wants.

Sherry Scheline, McCall, ID6 hours ago

I'm signing because foster care should be about what is best for the child and not what is best for the parent (s) that caused the child to be in foster care.

Randi Loveless, Twin Falls, ID6 hours ago

I've seen too many cases where the foster child has been harmed by being moved too many times. Short of the child being in a dangerous situation, they should be allowed to bond with a family who cares and has their best interest at heart.

Peggy Gilbert, Nampa, ID7 hours ago

I work in the foster care system and believe that these children deserve better than being moved around without being listened to or consulted.

Jessica Kelly, Caldwell, ID7 hours ago

The interest of the children should always be the first priority.

Pat Wilde, Eagle, ID7 hours ago

I'm signing because I have personally worked on CPA cases where the kids have been moved and moved. I as the guardian ad litem did not feel it was in the best interest of the child, but did not have much say on where the child is placed.

Yazmin Rich, Star, ID7 hours ago

I have experience both as a foster parent and working with foster children. Reform is needed to ensure the best interest of the children.

Kathyn Stucker, Boise, ID7 hours ago

This needs to end.

Mike Clark, Boise, ID7 hours ago

I am in favor of Idaho foster care reform.

Dana McNatt, Eagle, ID7 hours ago

I am signing because I am concerned about the blatant disregard of laws and policies by the Department of Health and Welfare and the negative impact it is having on Idaho's foster children and all those associated with them.
Christine Dunn, Eagle, ID7 hours ago

We are currently in the process of becoming foster parents in another state. Idaho is home to us and we hope to return someday. When we do it would be lovely to become a foster family in Idaho as well. Hoping change will happen much much before then.
Karen Heaton, Harlem, GA7 hours ago

I support foster care reform
Tucker Johnson, Eagle, ID7 hours ago

I have been a foster parent and experienced first hand the frustrations of dealing with under-qualified, overworked social workers.
Deborah Hoopes, Eagle, ID7 hours ago

I am signing this petition because I am in favor of foster care reform. Thanks for your support.
David Palfreyman, Boise, ID7 hours ago

These three points will help to protect foster children from added emotional trauma. Trauma brought about by nonviable placement practices in the Idaho foster care program.
Gary Anderson, Eagle, ID7 hours ago

This is about the kids,,it need's to be reformed to give them there Best shot in life.
Annette Knebel, boise, ID7 hours ago

All children should matter in the state and their best interest should always be the number one concern.
Allison Patterson, Eagle, ID7 hours ago

I'm signing because I have seen so much unnecessary harm done to kids in the foster system over the past 3 years.
Kimberly Rutland, Eagle, ID7 hours ago

There needs to be a change so that we can keep good, honest, trustworthy families as foster care families!
Nicole Coates, Nampa, ID7 hours ago

Health and Welfare has been out of control for along time, they do not put the welfare of children first. When did it all come to be about them. They choose the job of being a advocate for the children, these children have already been abused. They look to these people that have taken them from their home to be their advocate not their second abuser.
Gerrie Ozmer, Horseshoe Bend, ID7 hours ago

I am a foster parent and decisions are made based on department rules not state laws. We have asked the question, "Is that a department decision or state law?" and never get a straight answer. This among many reasons are why I'm signing this petition.
melissa williams, Star, ID7 hours ago

The system is broken and needs fixing (oversight). Children are adversely affected as a result. Let's focus on the children
Brian McNatt, Eagle, ID7 hours ago

I watched or foster son be given back to his family just before the year deadline was up. His Mom wasn't ready for him. His Dad didn't want him, and called me the night before the hearing, completely intoxicated, and told me that. I told the case worker, and they still opted to give him to his Dad. I saw him several years later, when he was not quite 8... he had dropped out of high school, was on his nd kid with the nd girl, and was so intoxicated, he could hardly communicate with us. I would've happily raised him until there was somewhere stable to go, or forever, for that matter. He has been in jail several times, been involved in violent crimes, and that sweet little 9 year old, that we taught how to read, would have clearly been better off staying with us and our 4 children.
Kyndal Fondren, Nampa, ID7 hours ago

I truly believe this need's to be reform.
Annette Knebel, boise, ID7 hours ago

I agree reform is needed. The children's best interest needs to come first.
cricket Syes, Meridian, ID7 hours ago

I'm signing this petition because my family has been personally effected by H&W's choice to remove a nine month old baby we cared for since birth from our home to another foster home with no regard for the child's best interest or well-being in mind.
Brad Wilson, Meridian, ID7 hours ago

The system is broken and family that have opened there heart and homes are be torn apart
Trinity kautz, Boise, ID7 hours ago

This is something that is currently affecting my brother and his wife right now. They have had the pleasure of having amazing foster girls in their care for a yr and a half. and have been going through the steps to adopt them, which was to be finalized this month when the state out of the blue has told them that the decision had been made to replace the girls into a different home. The state refuses to return their calls or to give them a reason why the adoption will not proceed. Lawyers have been called on behalf of the girls, as well as to represent my brother and his wife to no avail. Apparently it is the state's sole discretion to make this decision even if the girls counselors, teachers, pastors, and their Casa advocate all say that it is a mistake to remove the girls from this home. the system is flawed and something needs to change before another family is destroyed.
Melanie Pope, Garden Valley, ID7 hours ago

As a current foster parent, we see first hand then need for change.
Joe Soelberg, Cascade, ID8 hours ago

Because social workers have to much control. Supervisors don't consider family/child's best interests. They only listen to social workers attachment is critical to a child's development.
Dawn Maglish, Star, ID8 hours ago

Change needs to happen. The case workers know that if you keep moving children from home to home, it is going to cause damage, and yet they keep doing it. Look at our society as a whole. It would be better for them to have hearts and do things right. Constantly moving children damages them, it does not help them. Shame on them. You would think they would know better.
melanie jones, Caldwell, ID8 hours ago

I'm a close friend with a family who's lives have been directly effected by the messed up way that Idaho handles their foster children. This needs to change for the sake of the children without a voice of their own.

Andrea Levora, Sandpoint, ID8 hours ago

I have personally seen the rights and welfare of the child take a back seat to every other possible concern in the foster care system in Idaho.

Heather Davis, Eagle, ID8 hours ago

I had Grandchildren in the system and did not like how things were handled.

Laraine mika, Sandy, UT8 hours ago

I believe in the best interest of the children. Let's make a positive change for their future.

Leah Obenchain, Meridian, ID8 hours ago

The needs of the child needs to come before numbers for funding for the department

Ellie Ibarra, Weiser, ID8 hours ago

I am in favor of Foster Care Reform. I wish to see the bill come before the legislature during the 6 session.

Arlene McCauley, Eagle, ID8 hours ago

My adopted grandson has been damaged by all things mentioned in the petition. Diagnosed with Teams, PTSD, ADDHD, Attachment disorder. Not one more child should suffer.

Allce Holt, Kootenai, ID8 hours ago

I'm signing because children need stability, safety, and love. As a foster parent, I have seen how many rights birth families have while the kids seem to have very few. This needs to change!

Samantha Sundquist, Boise, ID8 hours ago

health and welfare will take foster kids out of homes for no good reason. that is the very short reason have a long story of what the scumbags did to us and the kids.

Rich Keyes, Horseshoe Bend, ID8 hours ago

This very much needs to change, as a family who was directly effected by this system of things, it's wrong to move an attached child after all they only know is your family for the first year of there life, or any long term placement of a child who has formed healthy attachment. it's wrong to not have any support from the very people who placed that child, these children need to have the right to have stability and to be able to have lasting relationships and bonds , foster parents need to be heard, who know that child more then the one who cares for them day in and day out, this is why we need to petition

Anna Ahrnsbrak, Athol, ID8 hours ago

I feel compassion for the rights of children in foster care and finding them a good home.

Jennifer Chadwell, Hayden, ID8 hours ago

It is necessary for changes. The Dept. does not recognize or acknowledge judicial order as to what is in the best interest of each unique child.

Nikki Kiesel, Marsing, ID8 hours ago

I support this. The "System" is so broken. They want you to treat foster children as if they were your own!!! But they don't want you to love them. I was a foster parent for 8 years and I adopted my son through the State 9 years ago, it was tough but we fought and WE WON!

Vicki Wagner, Twin Falls, ID8 hours ago

I support this. The "System" is so broken. They want you to treat foster children as if they were your own!!! But they don't want you to love them. I was a foster parent for 8 years and I adopted my son through the State 9 years ago, it was tough but we fought and WE WON!

Vicki Wagner, Twin Falls, ID8 hours ago

The reform needs to happen, the same thing happened to the children in our care for 3 years

Corinne Larsen, Nampa, ID8 hours ago

I care about the well-being of children.

Cynthia Garrick, Farmington, UT8 hours ago

The protect the lives of foster kids.

Anna Blackford, Ponderay, ID8 hours ago

I am a foster parent and know first hand about all of the practices the Department does to the kids and the foster parents. We desperately need checks and balances in place and accountability.

Jessie Jackson, Marsing, ID8 hours ago

I strongly support the proposed legislation to begin bringing reform to our foster care system in Idaho.

Sarah Wilson, Mountain Home, ID8 hours ago

I want to see change. Too many children are being hurt in the current system. The needs of the child need to come FIRST.

Luann Kirkham, Rathdrum, ID8 hours ago

I would like to be a foster parent, but am concerned by the way things are currently handled in the system. A change needs to happen to encourage more families like ours to participate in fostering kids.

Elizabeth Olacsi, Kuna, ID8 hours ago

I am signing this because I was a foster parent and there needs to be huge changes for the children that are in the foster-care system . The System is very broken .

Ginger Kreiter, Boise, ID8 hours ago

I believe these changes will better serve the children in the foster care system and the foster parents who love them and want what is best for these children.

Robyn Winget, Eagle, ID9 hours ago

I have seen the foster care system from all angles, I have adopted foster children, I was a child protection case worker and I now do adoption home studies for families who want to adopt. I adopted two children from foster care who had been moved over 5 times and they were 3 and 5. I am a social worker and was involved with the child protection system as a case worker. I am now doing adoption home study and have been appalled at some of the adoptive placement that have and have not been made by the department. They have way too much power. They choose families to adopt children, so in a real sense they are creating families. The only person who creates families is God. So the department has the power to create families. They have gone way over board their scope of practice.

Shannan Mayer, Rupert, ID9 hours ago

AboutImpactBlogCareersTeamHelpPressAdvertise