

Ivy Smith's Testimony

March 18, 2019

Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Ivy Smith and I am here to testify in opposition to HB 170. I would first like to share that I entered the foster care system when I was twelve years old and remained in care until I aged out in 2016. My experience entering the foster care system was very traumatic for me and my story shows exactly what could happen if you pass this bill.

*I had a friend over one day after school and she had witnessed what happens when my mother loses her temper. That friend went home and told her parents what she saw and her parents immediately called CPS. The next morning my friend's mother called me and told me they just wanted to give me a heads up that they had reported my mother to CPS and they were going to launch an investigation. I was only twelve at the time and was scared of what that would mean, so I told my mother what happened. My mother stormed out to the garage, grabbed a suitcase, came back to throw it at my feet and said: "pack up your sh** and get out". I began crying and begging my mom not to kick me out. I pleaded to her that it wasn't my fault and I would say anything, but she had made up her mind. I ran up to my room and barricaded the door with my bookcase. My mother was pounding on the door screaming at me what she was going to do to me once she got in. Luckily, she never got through and she eventually gave up and went to bed. I was able to sneak out of the house in the morning to go school and little did I know that I would never be coming back.*

I share this story with you because it shows the kinds of dangers we would be putting children in if social workers are required to notify and read parents their rights before beginning a safety assessment. To assume that these parents are in a reasonable mindset and will act on the child's best interest is not only dangerous but is also naïve.

We know from reports from the Office of Performance Evaluations and from the interim Foster Care committee last year, that when people from the community call to report cases to CPS that they get it right about 99% of the time. This bill would only hinder social workers' ability to conduct these investigations in a timely matter and get a clear story. I would also like to point out that there was no attempt to collaborate with former foster youth, like from the Idaho Foster Youth Advisory Board, which I feel should have been a crucial step in the creation of this bill.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, HB 170 puts the rights of parents over the rights of Idaho's most vulnerable children. I urge you to please vote no on HB 170.