

3-18-2019

Sharon Pennington

From: Breanne Varela <bvarela123@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2019 9:48 AM
To: Sharon Pennington; Senator Todd Lakey; Senator Abby Lee; Senator Grant Burgoyne; Senator Patti Anne Lodge; Senator Kelly Anthon; sthayne@senate.idaho.gov; Senator Scott Grow; Senator Don Cheatham; mney@senate.idaho.gov; Senator Cherie Buckner-Webb
Subject: Please Vote no to SB 170

Please consider this as written testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Breanne Varela. I am a resident of District 19. I am a Licensed Social Worker who has worked with children and families as a social worker for over seven years and worked with families in varying capacities for 20 plus years.

SB 170-This bill, as written, would make working with parents more difficult by blurring the lines between social worker and law enforcement. Social workers are not officers, they do not have the same authority, they are not looking in to a crime when meeting with parents. A child welfare social workers main focus is to ensure a child is safe. If they can remain in the home safe with services, a social workers focus is to provide services in the home, so the child may remain in the home. Law enforcement is involved if the child cannot remain in the home and needs to be declared in imminent danger. If a social worker is reading the parents their rights, "You have the right to remain silent or consult with an attorney..." they sound like law enforcement and the parents are going to assume social workers are looking at them like criminals, blurring the lines. Social workers are not officers of the law.

Many times, throughout the year; social workers rush a child to the hospital and have been told if the child remained in the home a few more hours the child would have died. If the parents immediately deny a social worker to see a child and have to spend hours or days getting a warrant, Idaho will have more child deaths, or a child did not get immediate help and now suffers long term brain damage. The most vulnerable children in Idaho are the ones with no "eyes on them." Meaning they are not attending school, daycare, or any other activity regularly.

Implementing this bill would have social workers spending more time trying to get warrants and taking more time away from judges and prosecutors to review the warrants, and when warrants are served involving multiple officers. This is a lot of tax dollars that would now be used to get warrants to ensure children are safe. This is a lot of time that has gone by without ensuring a child is safe or the parents have not left that state. I am sure most parents would rather meet with the social worker immediately to get the case resolved and not have multiple patrol cars in front of their home being served a warrant.

Idaho's number one priority is to ensure children are safe and their basic needs are being met. Could you go to sleep at night knowing there are concerns for a child's safety and wellbeing? Despite what was said by the opposing views, social workers main goal is to quickly assess the family and if no concerns the social worker closes the case because there are more referrals and more children being reported unsafe. Sometimes family are appreciative because the social worker is able to find resources in the community that they were unaware of and would help their family function more efficiently. Child welfare social worker spend time helping families connect with community resources.

Passing this bill would blur the lines between law enforcement and social workers, put undue stress on the prosecutors and judges, put more stress on the social workers, impact federal funding because time

requirements to see a child would not be met, but most importantly it would impact children's safety everywhere.

Please vote NO on SB 170

Sincerely,

Breanne Varela, LSW

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