

**Testimony of Nora Kenny, Age 14, in Support of
HB405 - Family Law – Custody Evaluators – Qualifications & Training**

When I was around 8 years old, my family fell apart because my dad was arrested for abusing my older sister. My younger sister and I spent another year after that visiting him at my grandmother's house on certain days. However, my grandma didn't follow the given rules and allowed me and my sister to have unsupervised time with my father and even allowed us to sleep in the same room. The following year, me and my sister spent one evening a week at burger king with my dad, but this time it was supervised by a nice lady. When I was 10, I told my mom that I did not want to keep doing that and then I was finally free. I now know my mom spent two years after that battling in family court to keep me and my younger sister safe, that was until my dad was arrested for abusing other children. The court system did NOT protect me, my mom did. The person who knows how to deal with me best is my mom. If she is not given the responsibility to make decisions about my life, I AT LEAST want the person who is given that job to be trained specifically on these types of situations. I want them to be trained on how children's and teenager's brains develop, the facts about child abuse, signs of trauma in behaviors, and the long-term effects of childhood trauma. It makes me so mad to even think about the fact that the adults that could have been deciding my ENTIRE childhood have no idea how I feel, function, and what I need to heal and feel safe. I hate when people talk about what's fair to my mom or to my dad, what should matter in situations like mine is what's fair to ME. My childhood is made from so many small and large decisions, it feels insulting to know a COMPLETE STRANGER could be the one making those decisions instead of someone close to me. But what makes me even more angry is that the person that is given the job to make my childhood decisions isn't trained on child development, child abuse, trauma, and other important topics. I hope I will be aged out of the family court system by the time my dad gets out of jail, but my little sister will not be 18 before he is out of jail. I'm so scared for what could happen when my mom goes back to family court. The long term effects of trauma, which happens when these decisions are made incorrectly with poor judgment, are so incredibly horrific. I have been hospitalized multiple times since everything happened with my dad, I have struggled with mental illnesses such as anxiety and PTSD as well.