

Testimonial for Don and Linda Stolkovich

We lost our daughter Kristin four years ago and have been fighting in mediation and court for four years. The father Ron Eckert, of Natasia Donalyn Eckert, name given at birth, received custody after our daughter passed. Ron at the time resided in Pennsylvania and at that time we saw a mediator and was immediately granted temporary custody of every other weekend for six hours each time. We had a temporary order until Ron moved to Maryland. Ron was letting us see Natasia quite often and told us if we dropped the case that he would continue to let us see her without paying for lawyers and court expenses. Our mistake was trusting Ron for his word and we dropped our case. After living in Maryland and after we dropped the case, within three months the visits tapered off. Ron said Natasia was suffering from separation anxiety, which we believed because she would hide and cry when it was time for her to go back to Ron's home. All understandable considering all that this child had lost at such an early age and not receiving regular professional care. We begged Ron for all of us as a unit to go to therapy for Natasia to see that she was loved and cared by all. During these times Natasia needed all family support involved. Before our daughter passed Kristin had primary custody of Natasia and Linda watched Natasia and Toby (cousin 5 months older) from almost birth. When Linda retired in 2014 she moved in with Natasia and Kristin to help out with Natasia because Kristin was ill. Kristin was still able to carry out her parental duties but not all of the time on a daily basis when Natasia was in her care. Ron had visitation rights. Linda was like a de-facto parent to Natasia which made their relationship very close and strong. After Ron was in Maryland and took up residency within six months, he changed Natasia's given middle name, at seven years old, for which she was named after her maternal grandparents Don and Linda. The name was officially changed from Donalyn to Lillian and Ron sent a letter cutting off all relationship ties with Don and I and all of Kristin's family. Ron made up lies, just like he did to persuade us to drop the case. We fought for four years and was told Maryland has no grandparent laws and we could not fight the Supreme court for visitation rights if the father said it was not in the best interest of the child. Upon spending thousands of dollars and trying to get visitation rights we made an agreement, which the lawyer advised, to put money in Natasia's 529 plan and everyone go to therapy to try and mend feelings. Ron would only go if we paid 50k to Natasia's 529, in four years, and pay for therapy. Ron's only intention was to hurt us financially and emotionally for his satisfaction with no regards or taking the best interest of Natasia in consideration. We agreed with hopes that one day we could see Natasia with the therapist intervention. However, this action took place on November 8, 2019 and Ron is not taking Natasia to therapy regularly for her to get help let alone work with the intervening therapist, that is to work with us and Ron as well as Natasia's therapist. We continue to fight for grandparents rights in hopes that this bill, while not directly helping us at this time, may be a first step for us and other loving grandparents to seeing their grandchildren that we all love and miss deeply and should have Grandparent Rights enforced.