

# Christine J. Drumgoole

5220 Bangert Street  
White Marsh, Maryland 21162  
Cell: 410-952-1868 ([btsurvivor@outlook.com](mailto:btsurvivor@outlook.com))

**February 15, 2022**

## DELEGATE WANIKA FISHER

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
414 LOWE HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
6 BLADEN STREET  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

RE: **HB0561** CHILD CUSTODY – CASES INVOLVING  
CHILD ABUSE OR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE-TRAINING  
FOR JUDGES (CROSS FILED WITH SB0017)

Honorable Delegate Fisher,

I support **HB0561** favorably and offer my written testimony for consideration of the upcoming hearing to be held on Thursday, February 17, 2022.

I am a life-long resident of Baltimore County and have experienced the family court system in same. Although my divorce was granted in February of 2020, I am still experiencing post-separation abuse from my former spouse by way of litigation, finances, and domestic abuse by proxy via the minor children shared with my former spouse. I have been forced to maintain legal representation to protect the safety and best interests of my children and am approaching \$200,000 in legal fees in my case which has been identified as a “high-conflict” divorce. The Circuit Court Judges are simply not adequately experienced, trained, or certified to navigate a “high-conflict” divorce. This has negatively affected me and my children in many ways, mostly emotionally, financially, and a constant environment of living in fear of our abuser and his reach via the court system. To be clear, a “high-conflict” divorce is typically not a divorce between two problematic people, but rather a divorce between a victim their abuser/problematic individual. Such abusers/problematic individuals use the family court system to further victimize and traumatize their former partner/children and the courts are unwitting enablers during this process because of the lack of specialized training and continuing education in matters of abuse (emotional, psychological, spiritual, physical, financial, and via litigation), child sexual abuse, emotional trauma/PTSD of victims, addictions (both substance and process/behavioral), coercive control, and personality disorders.

My divorce began in February of 2015 when my then husband/partner of twenty (20) years admitted to having a secret, sexual life for the entirety of our relationship and his adolescent and adult life. He effectively had a double life as a sex addict/pornography addict and alcoholic which included: multiple affairs, compulsive viewing of pornography (including child sexual abuse documentation (a.k.a. child pornography)), compulsive masturbation, frequent visits to adult entertainment venues (“strip clubs”, massage parlors, adult book stores/pornography booths), use of the internet dating sites and Craigslist to meet sexual partners, frequent encounters with sex workers, prostituting himself, frotteurism, etc....

After two years of a therapeutic separation, in February of 2017 my former spouse admitted to a CSAT therapist that he sexually abused our daughter and was investigated by Child Protective Services (CPS). CPS determined an “INDICATED” finding of child sexual abuse and required supervised visitation between my then estranged spouse and our children. Unfortunately, my estranged spouse refused to cooperate with the detective and was not charged, for lack of a confession to the detective. I followed the professional advice of many therapists and professionals in the sex addiction (CSAT), betrayal trauma (APSATS), and Child Sexual Abuse (MOSAC) disciplines and was vigilant with supervised visitation between my estranged spouse and our children. I did my best to maintain a safe and healthy relationship between them whilst protecting myself and my children from our abuser and my estranged spouse’s co-morbid addictions and sexual predatory behavior. Yet, the family court system did not take action to protect me and our children.

In 2018, my estranged spouse filed for divorce to exert coercive control and force the issue of unsupervised visitation; specifically he was requesting sole physical custody, child support, and unsupervised visitation. This was my abuser and the abuser of my children using the family court system to further traumatize and victimize me and our children. Despite the preponderance of documentation regarding my estranged spouse’s abusive and addictive behaviors and patterns of unhealthy co-parenting and problematic behavior, our divorce case was treated as though we were equal parties to the dysfunction. I was placed in the precarious position of having to respectfully educate family court professionals on highly sensitive and traumatizing matters, including Judges and Magistrates, before I could effectively advocate for our children’s best interest. I am well educated, self-educated, and certified in matters of intimate partner violence, betrayal trauma/PTSD, child sexual abuse, sex/pornography addiction, and the best practices of keeping children safe in a co-parenting situation with an abuser and addict. Sadly, the Judges I encountered in the Baltimore County Circuit Court were uneducated, untrained, and not certified to identify the patterns of abuse, identifying coercive control, identifying post-separation (litigation, financial, and domestic abuse by proxy), and the connection between viewing of pornography of any sort and child sexual abuse. Sex and pornography addictions are progressive and lead to in-person sexual offenses in many situations. When child sexual abuse is a known factor, it will always be a threat for reoffending

and supervised visitation is necessary. Judges need to be able to identify these patterns of problematic behavior and how they negatively affect the other parent and most of all, the children in common. The best interest of the children is not being taken into consideration and often the perceived and entitled rights of a problematic parent are being held to a higher regard. I am sure that the Judges have the best interest of the children in mind, yet without contextual understanding of how abuse, addiction, and problematic personalities of some parents negatively affect children, Judges will continue to make decisions which are detrimental to the emotional, physical, and sexual health of the very children they are tasked to protect.

Please consider passing **HB0561** to assist Judges and Magistrates to be more wholly informed and credentialed through ongoing education and certification to have the legal tools necessary to protect children. When we as a society know better, we do better. Please help survivors of abuse keep themselves and their children safe from known threats. I thank you for your time and consideration.

SINCERELY,

*Christine J. Drumgoole*

CHRISTINE J. DRUMGOOLE

PROTECTIVE PARENT, ABUSE SURVIVOR, AND ADVOCATE