

Please support HB564, *Family law-Child Custody and Visitation-Disease or Illness*.

This bill is a shining star among an array of current family legislation that is destined to ruin the future of children, parents, and the family unit. HB564 is a fair and balanced bill and is necessary legislation due to the prevalence of disease and illness attributed to Covid. Covid has already disrupted jobs, the economy, and mental and physical health; Covid should not deny a parent child custody or visitation.

Divorce or separation can be hard on all parties involved, especially children. When divorce occurs, harsh feelings and resentment can lead to parental alienation, with one or both parents looking for any opportunity to deny visitation rights to the other parent. This behavior ranges from refusing to be flexible with the child's visitation schedule to respond to the child's needs, to scheduling the children in so many activities that the other parent is never given the time to visit, to resisting or refusing to cooperate by restricting the other parent's access to school records, medical records, and schedules of extracurricular activities. Of late, parental alienation involves using Covid (without hospitalization) as a reason to deny the other parent child custody or visitation.

HB564 seeks to ensure this no longer occurs.

Children thrive having two parents in their lives and spending as much time as possible with each of them. Children raised with only one parent actively involved in their lives are at higher risk for a wide variety of ills. Compared to children with two actively engaged parents:

- They are more likely to experience drug abuse, be victims of abuse and neglect, have behavioral problems, commit crimes, and go to prison.
- They are twice as likely to drop out of high school, and three times as likely to carry guns and deal drugs.
- Boys raised without both parents involved in their lives are more likely to become involved in gang activities.
- Girls raised without both parents involved are seven times as likely to become pregnant as a teenager.

These risks are often attributed to parental separation, but research shows these risks are not the result of the parents' *separation* but the loss of the significant involvement of both parents in the day-to-day parenting activities.

With Covid dividing our nation in a multitude of ways, courts should not allow it to further divide parents and children. It should be up to parents and the courts to do everything possible to see that children suffer as little as possible because of divorce or separation. HB564 keeps the best interest of children at the forefront and ensures children have frequent, continuing, and meaningful relationships with both parents.

Please support this bill.

*Family Reunion USA is a national non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public, media, and lawmakers on the importance of shared parenting, that grants both parents equal rights, responsibilities, and parenting time, while most importantly benefitting children.*