

March 8, 2022

I am writing to address the issue of foster parents etc. not being able to be admitted into a court hearing for a child or children that they are in care of. I have been a foster parent for about five years now. The problem with how the law is written currently, is that we are not able to stay in a court session. The other problem is that the caregiver has no say whatsoever on behalf of the child/ren. I like to think of it as a child having a parent, teacher meeting with the principal. It would be like the teacher getting kicked out of the meeting because they are not the parent. The problem we have is that we are the ones who are with the child/ren most of the time. We see what the child's struggles are, we see what their strengths are, we see what their triggers are. We have learned how to calm them down. We have been the ones who have had to help them when their parents have not shown up for visits. If we being the "teachers" are not allowed to show up at the meeting then you are missing a big piece of the puzzle to help these kids. We are all on the same team but one of the most important lines of defense to protect these kids are not allowed to help.

The other flaw with the system is that information can get lost in translation through written script. Have you ever read something that was understood one way but was meant another way? That is why it is not best to make big decisions with just the written word of doctors, social workers, or counselors. Allow the full time caregivers who know these kids best by letting us show up and speak up for these kids we love.

Thank you Niesha Buchanan